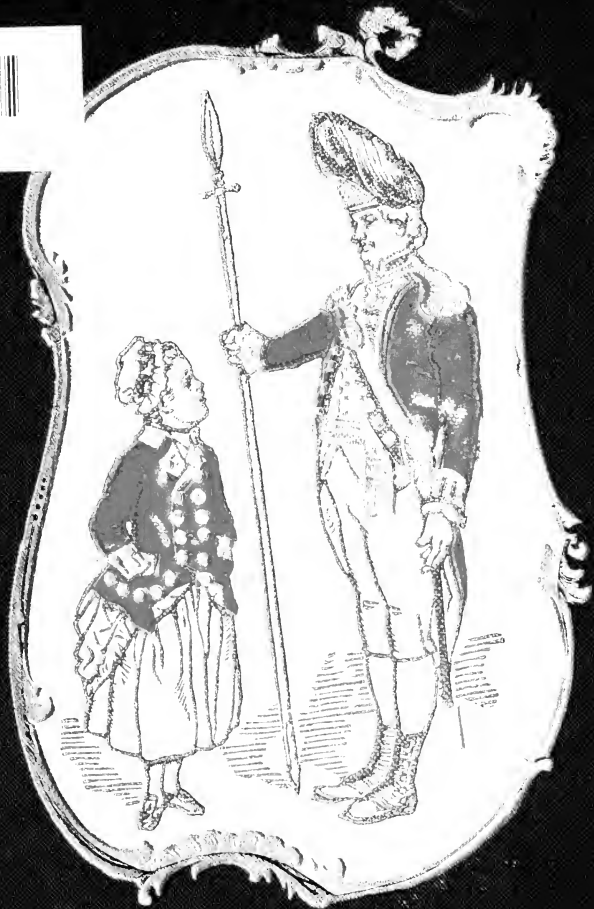


Local Little Red-Coat

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HAZEL'S CALL ON COLONEL ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

See Page 76.)

A LOYAL LITTLE RED-COAT

A Story of Child-life in New York a Hundred Years Ago

BY

RUTH OGDEN *pseud. of Ida*

Author of "His Little Royal Highness" and "Courage"



Fourth Edition

WITH OVER SIXTY ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY

H. A. OGDEN

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PREFACE.

IN the introductory chapter of "The History of the People of the United States," Mr. McMaster announces as his subject, "The history of the people from the close of the war for Independence down to the opening of the war between the States." It seems at first thought improbable that a history excluding both the Revolution and the Civil War should prove in any great degree interesting, but the first twelve pages suffice to convince one to the contrary. With consummate skill in selection and narration, Mr. McMaster has brought to light information of a singularly novel character. Impressed with this unlooked-for quality, it occurred to me that here was ground that had not been previously gone over—not, at any rate, in a story for children. "A Loyal Little Red-Coat" has been the outcome. Whether I have succeeded in transferring to these pages aught of the peculiar interest of the history remains to be seen. This much may be said, however, that every historical allusion is based upon actual fact. The English Circus, the Captain's letter, Harry's Prison-Ship experiences, Alexander Hamilton's successful defence of a Tory client, the treatment of the Bonifaces at the ball—all find their counterpart in the realities of a century ago. For much of the minor historical detail I am indebted to those rare and quaint old volumes, carefully treasured by our historical societies, which make possible the faithful recounting of the story of bygone days. In my attempt to reproduce the child-life of a time so far removed, I have probably been guilty of some anachronisms. If, however, I have woven a page of history into a story that, by any chance, shall interest the children, for whom it has been a delight to me to write it, I shall be sincerely grateful.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

RUTH OGDEN.

A LOYAL LITTLE RED-COAT

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.— <i>On the Albany Coach,</i>	9
II.— <i>Hazel speaks her Mind,</i>	17
III.— <i>The Circus, and What came of It,</i>	27
IV.— <i>Flutters,</i>	38
V.— <i>Captain Boniface receives an angry Letter,</i>	50
VI.— <i>Off for the Prison Ship,</i>	53
VII.— <i>Harry's Story,</i>	58
VIII.— <i>A Call on Colonel Hamilton,</i>	71
IX.— <i>Flutters has a Benefit,</i>	81
X.— <i>Darling Old Aunt Frances,</i>	94
XI.— <i>The Van Vleets give a Tea Party,</i>	101
XII.— <i>An Interruption,</i>	107
XIII.— <i>More about the Tea Party,</i>	113
XIV.— <i>Hazel has a Conviction,</i>	120
XV.— <i>Flutters comes to the Front,</i>	128
XVI.— <i>Colonel Hamilton "takes to" Harry,</i>	137
XVII.— <i>In the little Gold Gallery,</i>	142
XVIII.— <i>More of a Red-coat than ever,</i>	151
XIX.— <i>A Sad Little Chapter,</i>	165
XX.— <i>Flutters comes to a Decision,</i>	171
XXI.— <i>Some Old Friends come to Light,</i>	178
XXII.— <i>Good-bye, Sir Guy,</i>	185
XXIII.— <i>Flutters loses one of the Old Friends,</i>	194
XXIV.— <i>Two Important Letters,</i>	197
XXV.— <i>A Happy Day for Aunt Frances,</i>	205
XXVI.— <i>The "Blue Bird" weighs Anchor,</i>	210

A LOYAL LITTLE RED-COAT.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ALBANY COACH.



HAZEL BONIFACE was a Loyalist, which means that she was a hearty little champion of King George the Third of England, and this notwithstanding she lived in America, and was born there. It had happened to be on a crisp October morning of the year 1773 that Hazel's gray eyes first saw the light, and they no sooner saw the light than they saw a wonderful red coat, and just as soon as she was able to understand it, she learned that that red coat belonged

to her papa, and that her papa belonged to King George's army. So, after all, you see it was but natural that she should have been a little Loyalist from the start, and quite to have been expected that she should grow more and more staunch with every year.

Now it chanced one midwinter afternoon, when Hazel was

about six years old, that she came into the city—that is, into New York—on an errand with her father, and that she stood for a while watching a merry party of boys, who were having the jolliest sort of a time coasting down Powder House Hill, and skating on the clear, crystal ice of the Collect. The Collect and Powder House Hill! You never heard of them, did you, and yet may have lived in New York all your life; but you may believe the little New Yorkers of those days knew them and loved them.

The Collect (though where it got its name no one knows) was a beautiful sheet of water connected with the North River by a creek crossing Broadway, where we now have Canal street, and the hill where the Powder House stood was one of the pretty heights that bordered it. Wouldn't some of the little people who live in that crowded part of the city to-day be surprised to know, that only a hundred years ago ponds and hills took the place of the level city streets, and that a boy could start way over east of Broadway, skate under the arch at Canal street, and then strike out across the broad Lispenard meadows straight to the North River? But those boys of the olden time, who were spending their short afternoon holiday there on the ice, were exactly like the boys of to-day, in that they were cutting up the very silliest sort of capers. Hazel, however, thought it all very funny, and longing for the time when she should have a pair of skates of her own, wondered if that boy with the pretty name—that boy the other boys called Starlight—would teach her how to use them. And so one time when he came gliding her way she called out, quite to the surprise of her father, whose hand she stood holding, "Will you teach me how to skate when I grow old enough, Starlight?"

"Bless your heart, yes," came the answer, as soon as the finest little skater that ever buckled skates on the Collect could put the brakes to his winged feet, "but you must tell me your name, so that I shall know you when you grow up."

"Hazel, Hazel Boniface," she replied; "and is your name really Starlight? It's a beautiful name."

"Yes, Starlight's my last name; my other name is Job; that isn't so pretty, is it?"

"I should think not; I shall always call you just Starlight."

And Hazel had been true to her word, and had always called

Job just Starlight, and Job had been true to his promise, and had long ago taught Hazel to skate, for she was ten now and he fourteen, and they had been the best of friends this long while, notwithstanding Job was as zealous a Whig as was Hazel a Loyalist.

And now, for fear you should not happen to know just what is meant by Whig and Loyalist, you must—there is no help for it if you are to understand this story—put up with a solid little bit of history right here and now. You see Hazel was born in 1773, and as she has just scored a tenth birthday, that brings us to 1783, and 1783 found affairs in New York in a decidedly topsy-turvy state. A great war had been going on for eight long years called, as you know, the war of the Revolution, because the colonies in America had *revolted*, declaring their determination to be independent, and that King George of England should no longer be their king. And all that while, that is, during those eight long years, King George's soldiers had been in possession of New York, and many of the Whigs—and Whigs, remember, are the people who sided against King George—had fled from their dwellings, and scores of Loyalists, pouring into the city to be under the protection of the English soldiers, had made their homes in the Whigs' empty houses. But now matters were beginning to look very differently. The great war was over, the colonies had been successful, and although the English soldiers were still in New York, they were soon to go, every one of them, and the Whigs were returning in great numbers, and trying to turn out the Loyalists, whom they found living in their homes. Most of these Loyalists, however, were very loath to go, some of them, indeed, avowing that go they would not! No wonder, then, that affairs in New York in 1783 were in a decidedly topsy-turvy state; and this brings us to the real commencement of our story, and to Hazel, sitting alone on the porch of her home at Kings Bridge, and with a most woe-begone expression on her usually happy face. Suddenly a new thought seemed to strike her, and she started on a brisk little run for the gate; but it was simply that, hearing the sound of wheels in the distance, she knew that the Albany coach was coming, and the Albany coach was what she was waiting for. That was long before the days of railroads, and when all the travelling must needs be done in that "slow-coach" fashion.

The Albany stage was generally full inside, and, as Hazel expected, this morning was no exception; but that did not make the least difference in the world to her, for what she wanted was a seat beside Joe Ainsworth, the driver. Indeed, it was not an unusual thing for Hazel to ask for a ride into town, nor for Joe to grant it, so that the moment he spied her standing in the road ahead of him, he knew what it meant, and reined up his four dusty white horses.

Hazel looked very sweet and fresh, no doubt, in the eyes of the wearied travellers, who had journeyed all night in the jouncing stage, and, in fact, she would have looked sweet and fresh in the eyes of anybody whose eyes were good for very much. She wore a quaint little gown and kerchief, as yet without rumple or wrinkle, for it was but nine o'clock in the morning, and breakfast and a quiet little "think" on the porch had not proved in the least damaging to either skirt or kerchief. To tell the truth, Hazel had an intense regard for a fresh and dainty toilet, and somehow contrived to scale the side of the coach without in any way begriming her pretty dress, although she was obliged to make use of one great dusty wheel in ascending. First she planted both feet on its hub, and then by aid of Joe's hand fairly bounded to her seat beside him with quite as much grace as a little deer of the forest, and a "little dear" she was in point of fact, if you alter but one letter in the spelling.

"Well, Miss Hazel," said Joe, after he had started up his horses, "how are you this warm morning?" for it was early September, and the sun was already shining hotly down upon them.

"Oh, I'm very well," then, after a moment's pause, "No, I don't believe I am very well, either, because, Joe, I feel very blue."

"Blue!" exclaimed Joe; "you blue! Why, you ought not to learn even the meaning of the word these twenty years yet."

"Some children learn it very young, Joe," with a real little sigh.

"But what in creation have you to be blue about, I'd like to know? Perhaps you have gotten a spot on that pretty Sunday frock of yours," for Joe knew Hazel's little weakness in that direction.

"Joe!" said Hazel, indignantly, and with such a world of reproof

in her tone that Joe had to pretend to cough to keep from laughing. "If you think a moment, Joe, I'm sure you will remember that I have reason to feel very, very blue indeed."

Hazel was so serious that Joe felt in duty bound to put his thinking-cap on, and ransacked his brain for the possible occasion of her depression. Hazel, with childish dignity, did not offer to help him in the matter, and they drove for a few moments in a silence broken only by the creak of the weather-beaten stage, and the regular, monotonous rattle of the loose-fitting harness. Down through the dusty yellow leaves of the roadside trees the sunlight filtered, to the dustier hedges below, and there was little or no life in the air. Indeed, it was a morning when one had need to be very much preoccupied *not* to feel blue, as Hazel called it, and a discriminating person might have deemed the weather in a measure responsible for her down-heartedness. Meanwhile the horses jogged along at the merest little pretence of a trot, and, missing the customary, "Get-up, Jenny!" and "Whist there, Kate!" subsided into a walk, varied more than once by a deliberate standstill, whenever the "off-leader" saw fit to dislodge a persistent fly by the aid of a hind hoof. "Look here, driver!" called one of the passengers at last, "there's a snail on the fence there, that will beat us into town if you don't look out." The fact was, Joe had not only put his thinking-cap on, but had pulled it so far down over his ears, that he had quite forgotten all about his horses and Hazel, and his thoughts had gone "wool-gathering," as old people's thoughts have a fashion of going. "Get along with you," he called to the tired team, thoroughly roused from his reveries, and spurring them into greater activity with his long whip-lash; then, turning to Hazel, he said—"Come to think of it, I should not wonder if you are blue about that little Starlight matter."

"Little Starlight matter! Do you think it's a little matter, Mr. Ainsworth, to be kept out of your house and have a lot of soldiers living in it?"

"But they are King George's soldiers; that ought to make it all right in your eyes, Miss Hazel."

"Oh, the men are not to blame; they have to do as the officers tell them; but I hate that old Captain Wadsworth. Sometimes I think I'll write and tell King George what a dreadful man he is, for

I don't believe he knows. But, after all, they say it's an American, our own Colonel Hamilton, that's most to blame."

"Alexander Hamilton! Why, how's that?" exclaimed Joe, knowing well enough, but wishing to hear Hazel grow eloquent on the subject.

"Well, this is how it is, Mr. Ainsworth," and Hazel folded her hands and composed herself for what promised to be quite a long



"WELL, THIS IS HOW IT IS, MR. AINSWORTH."

story. "You know the Starlights. Well, they've lived right on that same piece of land ever since Job's great-great-grandfather, who was an Englishman, married a Dutch wife and came to live in New York. Why, there weren't more than half-a-dozen houses here when they came, and if anybody has a right to their land and their house, they have. They used to be a very big family, the Starlights did, but now there's only Job left and his Aunt Frances. She's the

loveliest lady, Joe, and so very fond of Starlight (that's Job), and Starlight is just as good to her as a boy can be. Well, one night, nearly two years ago, a party of English soldiers (some of them were awful bad fellows, Joe, even if they were the King's men) went about the street doing just about as they pleased, and Miss Avery—that is, Aunt Frances—was very much frightened, as well she might be, and the next day she packed up and took the ferry to Paulus Hook, to stay with some friends of hers, who live over there and own a big farm."

"You mean the Van Vleets, don't you?" questioned Joe, now wisely dividing his attention between Hazel's narrative and his horses, who were only too quick to detect any lack of vigilance on his part.

"Yes, do you know them, Joe?"

"Know 'em like a book, Miss Hazel. Old Jacob Van Vleet has been over the road with me scores of times."

"Well, they're very kind people, Joe, and Starlight and his aunt are living there still, only now that the war is over they want to come back."

"And that's not an easy thing to do, is it," laughed Joe, "when your house is full of English officers and their men?"

"But the soldiers have no right there, Joe, and the worst of it is, Captain Wadsworth says he is going to resign his commission and stay after his men go back to England, and make it his own home. He says it belongs to him. It was given to him, after Miss Avery left it, by what they call a military order. But, military order or no, Joe, that house belongs to Aunt Frances."

"Of course it would seem so, Miss Hazel—"

"And if it hadn't been for Colonel Alexander Hamilton she'd be in it to-day, Joe. You see she went to law about it, and they say Colonel Hamilton, who took Captain Wadsworth's side, is so smart and so handsome that he just talked the court into deciding against her."

"It certainly was mighty queer in Lawyer Hamilton," said Joe, meditatively, "to turn against his own side in that fashion; but, Miss Hazel, why don't you go and see him about it?"

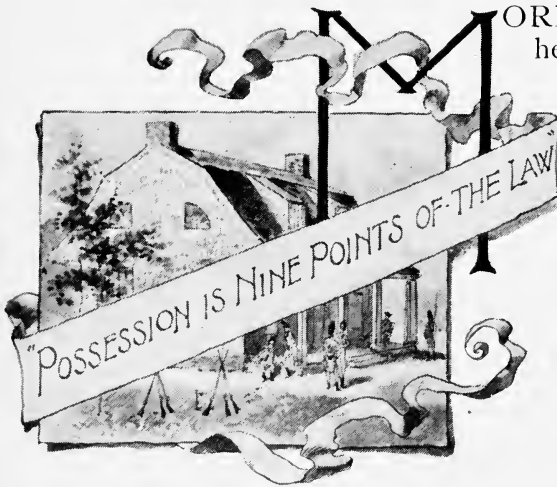
Hazel looked up a moment with a questioning gaze to see if he were quite in earnest.

"That is just what I am going to do this very day," she answered, reassured, "and first I want to see Captain Wadsworth. Let me down at the Starlights' gate, please."

So a few moments later the Albany coach reined up in front of the Starlight homestead, and Hazel, jumping quickly down from the coach with a "Thank you for the ride, Joe," swung open the old Dutch gate with an air well calculated to make the heart of Captain Wadsworth quake.

CHAPTER II.

HAZEL SPEAKS HER MIND.



MORE than one pair of ears heard the creak of the clumsy Dutch gate as it swung on its hinges for Hazel, for every door and window of Captain Wadsworth's quarters stood wide open to catch all there was of any little cooling breeze which might bestir itself that close September morning. And more than one pair of eyes glancing in the same direction saw Hazel coming up the

path and brightened at the sight of her. They knew her well, all those English soldiers, for she had often accompanied her father when he had come among them on business, and while he was busy here and there, had chattered in her frank, fearless way with one and another. Indeed, owing to her loyalist principles and a little red coat which she was in the habit of wearing, she was familiarly known among the rank and file of his Majesty's service as "Little Red-Coat," and often addressed by that name. But this was her first visit all by herself, and, to tell the truth, Hazel had some misgiving as to its propriety, and as to her own behavior in running off in this fashion, for she had announced her departure to no one. Her sister Josephine, however, had happened to see her taking her seat on the Albany stage, and wondered what she was up to. But "runaway" or no, the eyes that saw Hazel Boniface did nevertheless brighten at the sight of her,

from those of Captain Wadsworth's old body-servant, who was brushing the Captain's clothes very vigorously from one of the dormer-windows in the steep sloping roof, to those of the Captain himself, who sat tipped back in a great arm-chair in a corner of the wide piazza.

"Good-morning, Hazel," said the Captain, rising to meet her. "Have you come on some errand for your papa, or simply to pay us a nice little visit and cheer us up a bit? English soldiers need cheering nowadays, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Hazel, sympathetically; for, true to her Loyalist sentiments, she felt sorry enough that these same English soldiers had not been successful in the war they had been waging; but her mind was intent at present on her own private business.

"I have come just to make you a little visit, Captain Wadsworth," she continued, "and to talk to you a little, and I don't believe I can cheer you up at all, because I am pretty blue myself."

The corners of Captain Wadsworth's mouth twitched at the thought of such a fair and youthful little specimen indulging in the blues; but he succeeded in asking gravely, as he led the way indoors, "Why, how ever can that be? Come right into the office here and tell me all about it."

"This isn't the office at all," she said, emphatically, as she took her seat on a little Dutch rocker that had been Aunt Frances's sewing-chair. "This is the sitting-room, and it's dreadful, Captain Wadsworth, to see it so dusty."

Captain Wadsworth looked decidedly puzzled and astonished for a moment, then he added, slowly, "Oh, I see! I suppose you knew the people who used to own this house?"

"Yes, sir, and I know them now; they're the very best friends I have; and, if you please, this house belongs to them still, and they would like to come back just as soon as you can move your men out, and," noting a few unfamiliar objects in the room, "your furniture and other things."

It must be confessed that this was rather a bold speech for a little maid to venture quite upon her own authority, but Hazel had made this visit for no other reason than plainly to speak her mind, and speak it she would, though she did have to screw her courage up to the very highest pitch in order to accomplish it.

"Do you mean to say, Miss Hazel, that you think we have no right here?" questioned the Captain.

"Yes, sir," Hazel answered warmly, feeling, somehow, that Captain Wadsworth was open to conviction. "You see you really have no right here at all, and I thought that as soon as you understood that you would not stay another minute."

"But the trouble is, I don't understand it; the law says it belongs to me, you know."

"Then I guess the law does not tell the truth, Captain Wadsworth, because even the law cannot make a thing so that isn't so, can it?"

"Why, no, certainly not, and it isn't supposed to even try to do that sort of thing, I take it."

"But that's just what it does exactly," said Hazel, and in her eagerness she deserted the little rocker and came and leaned on the desk near to the Captain. "You know," she said, confidentially, "I'm just as true to King George as true can be, and I am awful sorry his soldiers have been beaten, and I don't think a country without a King is any good at all. Sometimes I'm almost ashamed that I was born here; but still, some very nice people, like Miss Avery and Starlight, do not think just as I do, and I think their rights ought to be respected."

These were pretty big words, and the Captain looked as though he thought so; but even a very little woman, when she is very much in earnest, sometimes finds language at her command quite as astonishing to herself as to her hearers. "Rights ought to be respected"—certainly that did sound remarkable. Hazel herself wondered where she had picked up so fine an expression, and one that suited so well.

"Who is Starlight?" asked the Captain, willing to digress a little from the main point.

"The owner of this house," said Hazel, not willing to digress at all.

"Why, I thought it used to belong to Miss Avery; the property certainly stood in her name." The Captain was careful to use only the past tense. According to his way of thinking, that Starlight homestead was just as rightfully his as though he had bought and paid for it.

And so Hazel said, "Good-by, Captain," and the Captain bowed her out of his office as gallantly as though she had been a little princess. Four or five of the men had gathered on the porch outside, thinking to have a chat with her when she should have finished her errand with the Captain, but Hazel, absorbed in her own thoughts, was about to pass them by without so much as a word.

"Look here, Miss Hazel, aren't you going to speak to a fellow?" one of the men called after her. "Yes, of course I am," Hazel replied, as though that had been her full intention, and, going back, held out her hand to Sergeant Bellows, the man who had called to her, and then, as it seemed to be expected of her, shook hands in a friendly way with the other men, all of whom she knew by name. But it was easy enough for the dullest among them to discover that her greeting lacked all its wonted cheeriness. Indeed, Hazel had not yet learned the need of disguising her real feelings, and always "carried her heart on her sleeve," as the saying goes, so that you were at perfect liberty to share all its sentiments, whether of joy or sorrow. So it was not strange that for the third time she was questioned as to the reason for her evident depression. "Feeling a little down this morning, eh?" asked Sergeant Bellows.

Hazel nodded her head in assent. "There's nothing an old sergeant could do for you, is there, Miss Hazel?"

"Nor a corporal?" asked one of the other men.

"Nor a high private?" asked another. Hazel took their offers of assistance in perfect good faith, and would not have hesitated to call upon any or all of them, but she really did not see how they could be of any use to her, and shook her head hopelessly.

"No, I think not. The only man who can help me now is Colonel Hamilton, and I don't expect very much of him. What I came down for was to ask Captain Wadsworth if he would not let the people who own this house come back to it; but he does not think they own it at all any more, and I don't see what they are ever going to do. How would you feel, I'd like to know," she asked, eagerly, "if you were an aunt and a little boy, and had to run away from your home, and, when you wanted to come back, found an English Captain living in it, who said he was going to stay there?" Some of the men looked as though they could not possibly tell how they would feel if they were "an aunt and a little

boy," but they were saved the embarrassment of being obliged to answer such a difficult question by Hazel's abrupt departure. She had suddenly spied a familiar hat lurking behind the shrubbery near the gate, and was off in a flash. "Good-by," she called back, "some one is waiting for me." Some one was waiting for her—some one had been waiting for her quite awhile and had grown rather impatient in the waiting.

"I thought you would never come, Hazel," said the owner of the hat, as soon as she swept down upon him in his retreat behind the bushes.

"Why, I did not see you till a moment ago. How long have you been here, and when did you come?"

"I came over on the earliest ferry this morning. I pulled an oar and worked my way over. You know, Hazel, I do not like to ask Aunt Frances for money now if I can possibly help it."

"Yes, I know," she answered, sadly.

"I can't tell you how it makes me feel, Hazel, to look up at the old house there with all those soldiers in it," said Job, rather savagely, for, of course, the new-comer was none other than Star-



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light himself. "I'd just like to rush right in and choke every one of 'em."

"And I'd like to help you," Hazel replied warmly.

Starlight looked up astonished. It was something new for Hazel to side against the Red-Coats, and he gave a low whistle of surprise.

"Yes, really, I would," Hazel reiterated. "If King George's men had beaten you Americans, I suppose you wouldn't have expected to get your home back again; but to think that you have beaten, and yet that Captain Wadsworth says he is going to stay in it, and that a great lawyer, and one of your own officers like Colonel Hamilton, says he has a right to—well, I can't understand it."

"Neither can I," said Starlight, indignantly; and both children seriously shook their heads from side to side, as there was no gain-saying that great man. By mutual consent the children had turned their backs on the homestead and their faces in the direction of Hazel's home.

To say that, side by side, they strolled up the Bowery, and that now and then Hazel would pause a moment to pick a plummy spray of asters, growing by the wayside, must sound funny enough in the ears of any one who knows what the Bowery is to-day. Can it be possible that that great busy thoroughfare, with its block after block of cheap shops, crowded tenements, dime museums, and who knows what, less than a hundred years ago was a country lane? and where to-day train after train goes whizzing by on its mid-air track, birds sang in apple-tree boughs and children gathered daisies in spring-time and golden rod in autumn? Yes, my dear, it is possible; for who can measure the great transforming power of even a single century, and Father Time has never wrought vaster or more rapid changes than in the self-same hundred years which lie between the childhood of Starlight and Hazel, in 1783, and yours of to-day.

So, true it was that our little friends strolled up Bowery Lane, for that was the pleasantest way home, and true it was that the lane was skirted with orchards and the gardens of old Dutch homesteads, where almost every variety of autumn flower was blooming, in a blaze of color, in the early September weather.

At the prospect of a visit from Starlight, Hazel had at once abandoned all thought of an immediate call upon Lawyer Hamilton. Even that important matter could be postponed for the delight of companionship with this old friend, a companionship sadly interfered with by all the untoward circumstances of the times in which they lived.

"And Colonel Hamilton says," Starlight resumed, after five or ten minutes, which had been devoted to a plying of eager questions regarding each other's general welfare, "that Captain Wadsworth can stay in our house, does he?"

"I don't know exactly what he says; something like that, I guess; but I am going to find out for myself, and ask him the reasons, too. I was going there this morning if you had not come."

"You are awfully good, Hazel."

"I'm glad you think so, Starlight, 'cause I know some people who don't," and Hazel indulged in a little sigh. "I suppose I shall have a scolding when I get home, this very morning, for I sort of ran away. I saw the Albany coach coming, and I had to hurry so in time to stop it, that I did not think to ask Josephine's leave or anybody's."

"But Josephine saw you go. That's the way I found you. She saw Joe Ainsworth help you on to the coach, and I thought perhaps you'd gone down to the homestead, for that's where you always used to come on the Albany coach, you know." It was Starlight's turn for a sigh now, and he drew such a heavy one that it seemed fairly to come from the bottom of his boots.

"Say, Starlight," said Hazel, suddenly, and, no doubt, with a desire to brighten matters up a bit, "an English circus came to town to-day. They open to-morrow. Can you stay over to-morrow?"

"Yes, till the day after. I heard about the circus. I've never been to a circus in my life, and I'd give—why, I'd give anything I own to go, and if that wouldn't do, I half believe I'd almost hook something." The question of ways and means was ever present nowadays to poor Job with his sadly depleted pocket-book.

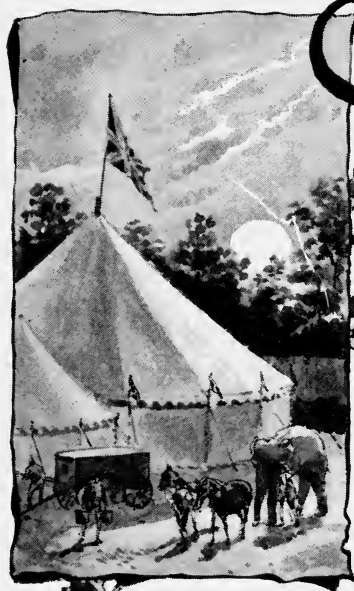
"I don't believe you'll need to *hook* anything, Starlight," answered Hazel, with an implied rebuke, which was, of course, quite proper, "I have a little money of my own."

"Of course, I don't mean I really would, Hazel. I should think you'd know that I'm rather above that sort of thing. If you don't, you ought to, by this time. I only meant that I should very much *like* to go."

"Then next time you had better be more careful to say just what you mean, Job." Whenever Hazel had any little reproof to administer she thought it much more impressive to make use of Starlight's solemn little first name.

CHAPTER III.

THE CIRCUS, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.



LOWLY out of the great ocean rose the sun the next morning, shooting his long rays over level Long Island, spanning the East River and touching with rosy light the hill on which Captain Boniface had built his comfortable home. What a wonderful tale, provided his memory is good and his eyesight strong, this same old sun could tell, particularly if he had the moon to help him, for, whether shining

brightly, or peering through mists of heavy clouds, between them they have seen most of this world's doings. One thing is certain, however, change, change, change would be the theme of all their story. Old ocean alone re-

mains always the same; for even the "everlasting hills" may be pierced by boring tunnels and disfigured by the shafts and engines of unsightly mines.

And this that is true of the whole world is true of every inhabited corner of it, and doubly true of that particular corner where we find New York mapped out to-day. Row upon row of dwellings—mansion and hut crowding close upon one another; mile after mile of stores, warehouses, and every conceivable sort of structure, and yet only a hundred years, and lo! there was none of it.

Do you chance to know where St. Paul's Church stands on Broadway, on the block bounded by Fulton and Vesey streets? Then let me tell you that no longer ago than 1784 St. Paul's was on the very outskirts of the city. Just above it were two fine dwellings, which now form part of the Astor House, and a little farther on a highway leading to the right bore the weather-beaten sign, "The Road to Boston," and another turning to the left, "The Road to Albany," and Hazel's home was a mile or more out on this Albany road. Beyond were only open fields, with here and there a farm-dwelling or country homestead, and an occasional "mead-house" or "tea-garden," for the refreshment of jaded travellers, or pleasure-seeking parties from the town. Nearly on the site of the present City Hall stood the almshouse, and in close proximity the jail, while sandwiched in between them were the gallows, not exactly affording what might be called a cheery outlook to the poor unfortunates obliged to seek such food and shelter as the almshouse offered. These gallows were enclosed in a building shaped like a Chinese summer-house, and painted in all the colors of the rainbow, as though trying thereby to overcome any mournful associations which the place might otherwise possess. A platform within this remarkable building supported various contrivances for conveniently "dropping malefactors into eternity," while a row of hooks and halters adorned the ceiling, so that at least half a dozen offenders might be dispatched by the same method at one and the same moment.

Wall Street, in 1783, was a street of residences. Here was the bachelor homestead of Daniel McCormick, upon whose stoop, on a mild and pleasant afternoon, you were likely to find a goodly little company of cronies and toadies, each and all of whom made it a point never to refuse an invitation to remain to dinner and enjoy his excellent pot-luck.

The court end of the town lay in the region extending from Pearl Street around to the Battery, and up to Trinity Church, while the shops and offices were confined to Maiden Lane. On Great Dock Street, now a part of Pearl Street, lived the widow of John Lawrence, who, during his lifetime, was widely known as "Handsome Johnnie." There, as Dr. Duer puts it, in his "Reminiscences of an Old Yorker," the genial widow kept open house for her rela-

tives, or rather her relatives kept open house for themselves, and were entertained in the roll of "transient, constant, or perpetual" visitors. All this and far more could the sun of to-day tell of the sights of the last century; but on the morning of which we are writing, he looked down upon nothing of greater interest to the average boy and girl of all time, than when he flashed suddenly upon the preparations going forward for the circus that had lately arrived from across the water, and because of whose arrival there was a flutter in all the child-hearts throughout the length and breadth of the town. Some were fluttering joyously with actual anticipation, and some with grave doubts as to their gaining even a peep at the wonderful show.

As for Hazel Boniface, she was not only up with the sun, but up before it; as for Starlight, he was dressed, and "trying to kill time" a full hour before breakfast, for it had been settled the previous evening that they were to be allowed to attend the performance, and Captain Boniface had slipped the coins necessary for their admission into Starlight's safe keeping. Josephine, Hazel's older sister, was also early astir, stowing away the most inviting of luncheons within the snowy folds of a napkin, which in turn was committed to the keeping of a little wicker hamper.

Joyous and beaming the children set forth, Josephine accompanying them as far as the gate. "I wish I were going with you," she said, as she held it open.

"I almost wish you were," Hazel answered. "Almost, but not quite," laughed Josephine; "for it would spoil the fun a little, now wouldn't it, Hazel, to have a grown-up sister in the party? But you need not worry, dear, the big sister must stay at home to mind the baby sister; it's only the little middle-sized sister who can roam abroad, and go to the circus, and do whatever she likes all day long."

The color came into Hazel's cheeks. She knew she did do pretty much as she wished from week's end to week's end, but that was not her fault. If nobody told her to do "things," it was hardly to be expected she should do them. "Will you go in my place?" she asked, ruefully, of Josephine, who stood leaning on the gate with a merry, teasing look in her gray eyes.

"No, of course I won't, dearie, and you come straight back and

give me a kiss, and know that no one wishes you quite such a jolly time as your own sister Josephine."

And thus speeded on their way, the children's figures grew



"WILL YOU GO IN MY PLACE?" SHE ASKED, RUEFULLY.

smaller and smaller in the maple-shaded distance of the roadside path, and with a little sigh Josephine turned back to her duties within-doors. There was a foreboding of coming evil in her heart,

and in Hazel's and Starlight's, too, for that matter. Children though they were, they were still old enough to know, that, now that the war had ended in the defeat of the English, those who had sided with them, as Captain Boniface had done, would have to suffer for it; but for to-day every worry was utterly forgotten. Hazel had no thought for the coming interview with Colonel Hamilton—which, it must be confessed, she rather dreaded—nor Starlight for the soldiers in the old homestead.

Right before them lay all the delights of a wonderful English circus, and with the lightest of hearts they set forth upon their happy expedition. Having strolled along in leisurely fashion, the old town clock struck eleven as they pressed in through the clumsy turnstile which barred the circus entrance, and the regular performance was not to commence until one. But two hours were none too much for the inspection of the wonderful side-shows, and wide-eyed they passed from one to the other, instinctively turning quickly away from two or three human monstrosities in a close, unsavory tent, to spend an hour of intense merriment over the antics of a family of monkeys in a cage in the open air. Indeed, they doled out most of their luncheon to the mischievous little youngsters, actually forgetting that there was any likelihood of their ever being hungry themselves and repenting of such liberality.

A great deal of fuss over a circus, you may be thinking, my little friend, having yourself been so many times to see "The Greatest Show on Earth;" but if you had lived in the days of Hazel and Starlight, and never seen a circus in your life, nor a show of any kind—either great or small—then, perhaps, you would have been not a little excited too.

Long before it was at all necessary, and after much consultation and numerous experiments at different angles, the children seated themselves at the precise point which they had concluded, on the whole, offered greatest advantages, and then they impatiently watched the uncomfortable benches become gradually filled, and certain significant preparations going forward on the part of the gayly-liveried lackeys.

At last the orchestra of three ill-tuned instruments struck up a preliminary march, the low, red-topped gates of the ring swung open, and the gorgeous company pranced in, dazzling and brilliant

indeed, in the eyes of the children. What did it matter if tinsel were tarnished, and satins and velvets travel-stained and bedraggled. They saw it not. It was all glitter and shimmer to them, and, oh, those beautiful, long-tailed horses with their showy trappings! Hazel silently made up her mind on the spot, that she would be a circus-rider herself as soon as she was old enough, *if* her father would let her. She changed her mind later in the day, however, owing to certain unexpected experiences, and was thankful enough that she had not openly expressed her resolution of a few hours before.

Midway in the performance, as the clown had announced, for they did not have printed programmes in those days, there was to be some lofty tumbling by the Strauss brothers, and at the proper moment in they came leaping and jumping. They were all attired in the regulation long hose, short trousers, and sleeveless jackets of the professional tumbler, but it was easy enough for any child to detect at a glance that it was quite impossible that they should belong to the same family. They were of all ages and sizes, but the youngest performer did not appear to be more than twelve; he was a handsome little fellow, with a fine dark complexion, and from the first both Hazel's and Starlight's attention centred upon him. He proved himself the most agile of all the brothers, eagerly watching for his turn every time, and apparently enjoying the performance almost as keenly as the audience. But it happened after a while, that when he had just accomplished the feat of turning a double somersault from the top of a spring-board, he did not attempt to rejoin the other leapers and tumblers, but crept from the place where he had landed in the sawdust to the edge of the ring, seated himself, with his little slippered feet straight out before him, and leaned comfortably back against its rail. The spot he had chosen was directly underneath where Hazel and Starlight were sitting, and being in the first row they naturally leaned over to investigate matters. He sat there so comfortably, and his older brothers seemed so indifferent to the fact that he had dropped from their number, that the children came to the conclusion that he was simply taking a little permitted rest.

At last Starlight made so bold as to ask, "Say, Straussie, you didn't hurt yourself any way, did you?"

At the sound of Starlight's voice the little fellow looked up surprised. "Yes, I did," he replied, "I often slip my knee-cap, or something like that when I take that double 'sault."

"Does it hurt you now," asked Hazel, with real solicitude.

"Yes, a little. I can't jump any more to-day. The men know what's the matter with me. I'll be all right in a little while."

"Do you like being in a circus?" continued Starlight, for it was even more interesting to converse with a member of the troupe than to watch the performance of the troupe itself.

"I like the jumping and tumbling; that's all the part I like," ending with a sigh.

But it was not easy to carry on a conversation at the distance they were from each other, particularly as the tumblers, as if to add to the excitement, kept up an almost ceaseless hallooing and shouting. Now it happened that the ring, with the exception of the gates of entrance, was formed by a short canvas curtain suspended from a circular iron rail. Observing this, a happy thought occurred to Starlight.

"Look here, Straussie," he said, in a penetrating whisper, "I'd like to talk with you. Couldn't you creep under the curtain there, and I'll drop down between the seats."

"Yes, I could," answered the little tumbler, grasping the situation at once, and suiting the action to the word.

"I wish I could drop too," urged Hazel, longingly.

"No, you stay where you are. It wouldn't do, Hazel; folks might notice," and Hazel was sensible enough to see the wisdom of the remark. As it was, every one was by far too much absorbed to take account of the fact that a little fellow inside the ring and a little fellow outside of it had disappeared at one and the same moment. And so it happened that all unsuspected a very important conversation was carried on, and a remarkable scheme planned under the crowded benches of that day's performance. Meanwhile Hazel "sat on pins and needles." Even "the most educated elephant in the world" failed to rouse much interest in a little maiden who knew an absorbing conversation to be going on almost within earshot and in which she longed to have a hand.

"What is your name?" asked Starlight, as soon as he had dropped safely to the dry grass, and had stretched himself beside the little

tumbler, who sat with his knees gathered close to him and his hands clasped round them.

"Flutters," answered the boy.

"That's not your real name?"

"That's what they call me."

"You mean the circus people?"

Flutters simply nodded "yes." Somehow he did not seem at first inclined to be quite as communicative as Starlight would have wished.

"It must be fun to wear clothes like those," he said, after a pause, eyeing his new friend from head to foot with evident admiration.

"Oh, it's kind of fun for a while, but there isn't much real fun. Everything's only kind of fun, and there isn't any fun at all about most things."

Starlight couldn't quite agree with these sage remarks, although he had himself of late been seeing a great deal of the darker side of life.

"I guess you're not very well, Flutters," he said, seriously; "or perhaps you're tired."

"Oh, I'm well enough, but I'm not over-happy," answered the boy, who, from little association with children and much with older people, had formed rather a mature way of speaking.

"What makes you feel like that?" asked Starlight.

"Oh, lots of things. There's no one who cares for me 'cept to make money out of me. That's kind of hard on a fellow."

"Don't you get some of the money yourself?"

"Not a penny. You see, I'm 'prenticed to the manager till I'm eighteen."

"Who apprenticed you?" said Starlight, taking care to speak correctly.

"The manager, I suppose; but I did not know anybody had to 'prentice you. I thought you just 'prenticed yourself by promising to work for your board."

"Not a bit of it. You oughtn't to have made such a promise. If you were worth anything to the manager you were worth part of the money you earned. Besides, I don't think anybody can apprentice a boy except his parents or his guardian, or some one who has charge of him."

"Well, nobody's had charge of me this long while."

"Is that big man with the great black moustache the manager?" asked Starlight.

"Yes, he is, and he's a tough one," and Flutters pressed his lips tightly together and shook his head by way of emphasis.

"He doesn't look kind."

"Folks doesn't look things what they never are."

"Why don't you cut the circus, Flutters?"



"WOULD YOU, REALLY?"

"You mean run away?"

Starlight nodded yes.

"Where to?" was Flutters's pointed question.

"Oh, anywhere," somewhat vaguely.

"That's all very well; but board, you know, and a blanket to roll yourself in at night is a little better than nothing at all."

"That's so," said Starlight, and then sat silent a few moments,

drawing his fingers, rake fashion, through the dry grass in front of him, and evidently thinking hard.

"Flutters," he said at last, "if you ran away I believe you'd find a home and somebody to care for you—we'd look out for you ourselves, Aunt Frances and I, till something turned up."

"Would you, really?" and Flutters leaned very close to Starlight in his eagerness.

"Yes, I'm sure we would. Will you do it?"

"Yes, sir, I'll do it now," and Flutters got straightway on to "all fours," as if he deemed that the most silent and effective mode of escape, although the benches were hardly so low as to render it necessary for a boy of his size.

"But you'll be caught in a minute in those—fixings." Starlight did not think there was enough of them to deserve the respectable name of clothes.

Flutters sat down in despair. "Then there's no use; I may as well give it up if I have to go back for anything." Flutters stood in such fear of the manager that he felt sure he could read his very thoughts. He honestly meant that he would abandon the whole scheme rather than face Mr. Bradshaw with such a design in mind, and he looked down at his spangled slippers and bedraggled tights in most woe-begone fashion.

"I have it," said Starlight, after a moment's serious cogitation; "wait here a minute;" and taking hold of a board directly under the seat where he had sat, he pulled himself up to his place beside Hazel. She was ready with a host of eager questions, but Starlight, in the most imperative of whispers, gave her quickly to understand that there was no time for anything of that sort. "Just do as I tell you, Hazel," some one overheard him say, but more than that they fortunately did not hear.

A moment later Starlight disappeared, and a little red cloak, which Josephine had made Hazel carry with her, had disappeared too.

Not long afterward, but it seemed a very long while to Hazel, the entertainment came to a close with a wild sort of farce, which everybody seemed to think pretty funny, but Hazel did not so much as smile. She had neither seen nor heard what was going on; she had an important little piece of business ahead of her, and

could hardly wait to be off and about it. If her seat had not been quite in the middle of the row, so that she would have been obliged to crowd past a long line of people, she simply could not have waited; and now that the performance was actually over, she energetically pushed her way through one group after another, lingering about as if loath to desert the charms of the circus, and was clear of the great tent in almost less time than it takes to tell it. Off she darted down the road—down Broadway one would say to-day—for the gateway to the circus enclosure was exactly on the spot where Niblo's Theatre has for so many years set forth its varied amusements.

There was only one farm-house in the immediate neighborhood, and thither Hazel flew, bringing up at the threshold of its old Dutch kitchen in a state of breathless excitement. "Mrs. Van Wyck," she cried with what little breath she had left, as she peered over the half door that barred her entrance.

"In a moment, Hazel," came a voice from the depths. "I am putting some curd in the cheese press; I'll be up in a minute."

The minute afforded Hazel a much-needed breathing space, and when a rosy-cheeked Dutch Frau emerged from the horizontal doorway of the cool, clean-smelling cellar, Hazel was able to make known her request in quite coherent fashion.

"Oh, Mrs. Van Wyck, *will* you let me have a pair of Hans's trousers, and some shoes and a coat, and please, please don't ask me what I want them for!" for she saw the question shaping itself on Frau Van Wyck's lips; "I'll bring them home safe to-morrow, and tell you all about it."

The little woman looked decidedly astonished, but the child was so urgent, and withal such a little favorite of hers, that she could but accede to her request, and in a trice Hazel was off again with the coveted articles, in a snug bundle, swinging from one hand as she ran.

CHAPTER IV.

FLUTTERS.



IT may seem at first somewhat improbable that Flutters should have been able to make his escape from the circus grounds without being noticed, but escape he did under Starlight's cautious guidance. Every one was still intent on the performance itself; outside were only a few straggling employees of the company, and they were too much preoccupied with the special duties assigned to them to pay any heed to the fact that a couple of boys were making their way through the grounds. Indeed, it was decidedly too common an occurrence to excite any suspicion. To be sure, Hazel's cloak concealed neither the head nor feet of little Flutters; but velvet cap and satin slippers were tucked safely away, and the absence of hat and shoes was by no means unusual among the boyish rabble that found their way into the circus. The most dangerous, because the most conspicuous move in their plan of escape, would be the scaling of the high board fence, so they naturally made their way to its most remote corner. It needed but a moment for Flutters to scramble to its top and drop on the other side. Starlight made more clumsy work of it. It was not an easy thing to keep one's hold on the slippery inside posts of the fence, and when he was near the top he heard some one calling at his back, which did not

tend to help matters. Astride the fence at last, however, he glanced down and saw a forlorn old man close at his heels, one of the drudges of the circus, whose duty it was to keep things cleared up about the grounds

"Look you there, you youngsters! what are you doing?" he cried, in a cracked voice; but Flutters and Starlight were safe out of sight now, and smiled at each other with supreme satisfaction.

"That's Bobbin's voice," chuckled Flutters, as they walked off through the woods that grew close up to the circus; "he could get over a mountain as easily as over that fence; he has the rheumatics awful bad, and he's very old besides. He's the only one I mind about leaving."

Poor old Bobbin stood gazing up at the fence, and seemed wisely to come to the conclusion that there was no harm in a boy's leaving the circus in that manner if he chose. The harm would be if he attempted to come in that way; and so hobbled off to his dreary, back-breaking task of gathering up the papers and stray bits of rubbish constantly accumulating on every side. It is possible, too, that even if he had recognized Flutters, and guessed his motive, he would not have tried to detain him. He had once been a tumbler himself, and knew enough of the trials of circus life to be willing, perhaps, that a promising little fellow should escape them.

The grove in which the boys found themselves was the only



"LOOK YOU THERE, YOU YOUNGSTERS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

piece of old forest land that remained in the near vicinity of the town, and was fitted up with rude tables and benches for the use of picnic parties.

Starlight led the way to one of these tables, sat down, and comfortably rested his folded arms upon it, as though they had reached their point of destination. Here was where Hazel was to meet them and, while they waited, the boys entertained each other with little scraps of their life histories; but Starlight did not for a moment forget to keep eye and ear on guard for any one approaching. There was a hollow tree just at Flutters's back, into which he could tumble in a flash and be securely hid should it become necessary. But the sound of their own low voices and the occasional fall of a pine cone or crackling of a branch was all that broke the stillness. At last they heard a footfall in the distance, but Starlight knew that quick, short little step, and there was no need for Flutters to take refuge in the tree. Hazel had come with the precious bundle, that was all, and Flutters was straightway arrayed in Hans Van Wyck's clothes, his dark little face not at all agreeing with the Dutch-looking coat and trousers; but they answered the purpose of complete disguise, and what more could be wished for? So the children set out for home at a brisk pace, not by the way they had come, but, so far as possible, by cross cuts and quiet lanes, to avoid observation. That their little tongues moved even faster than their feet was not at all strange, for, of course, they wanted to know all about each other.

"Are you an Italian, Flutters?" asked Hazel, in the course of the cross-questioning.

Flutters smiled, and shook his head in the negative.

"Then I guess you're Spanish," remarked Starlight.

"No, not Spanish."

Hazel and Starlight looked mystified. He was certainly neither American nor English with that dark skin of his.

"What kind of people does that sort of hair grow on?" Flutters asked, running his hand through his tight-curling hair.

"On—on darkeys," answered Hazel, ruefully. "But it does not curl so tight as—as some darkeys," hoping there might be a mistake somewhere.

"So much the better for me," Flutters answered, cheerily.



“WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DOES THAT SORT OF HAIR GROW ON?”

"Are—you—a regular—darkey—really?" questioned Starlight, with a little pause between each word.

"Well, I'm what they call a mulatto; that's not quite so bad as an out-and-out darkey, perhaps."

"Oh, Flutters, don't you mind?" asked Hazel, who was disappointed enough that the hero of this thrilling adventure should prove to be only a kind of negro. Hazel had an idea as, sadly enough, many far older and wiser than she had in those days—and, indeed, for long years afterward—that negroes were little better than cattle, and that it was quite right to buy and sell them in the same fashion.

"What would be the use of minding?" said Flutters, in response to her sympathetic question; "minding would not make things any different, Miss Hazel."

It was the first time he had called her by name, and Hazel, 'born little aristocrat that she was, was glad to discover that "he knew his place," as the phrase goes—so far, at least, as to put the Miss before her name.

After this the children trudged along for a while in silence, each busy with their own thoughts. Starlight was beginning to have some misgivings as to the course he had taken. It might, after all, become a serious question what to do with Flutters. He began to wonder how Aunt Frances would look when he should go back to the farm-house next day with his little protégé in tow. She would be pretty sure to say, "What are you thinking of, Job dear? It is not at all as though we were in our own home, you know. We cannot allow the Van Vleets to take this strange little boy into their home for our sakes; though no doubt they would be willing to do it."

Yes, the more he thought of it, the more he felt sure that would be just what she would say; strange that all this had not occurred to him before, and a little sickening sensation—half presentiment, half regret—swept over him. So it was that Starlight trudged along in silence, for, of course, such thoughts as those could not be spoken with Flutters there to hear them.

As for Hazel, she was turning over a fine little scheme of her own in her mind. She was a hopeful little body, and it did not take long for her to recover from the despair into which the dis-

covery of Flutters's nationality had thrown her. "Why, look here," she thought to herself, "I believe I'm glad he's a darkey after all. It was awful cute to hear him say 'Miss Hazel;' how nice it would be to have him for a sort of body-servant, just as so many officers have body-servants! He could brush my clothes, and groom the pony, and tend to my flower garden, and just stand 'round, ready to do whatever I should wish;" and so it was that Hazel trudged along in silence, for she thought it wiser not to announce, as yet, the exact nature of her thoughtful meditation.

And Flutters—well, it would have been hard to tell about what he was thinking. He was a most sensitive little fellow, and strong and intense were the emotions that often played through his little frame, so strong and intense at times as to find no other expression than in a perceptible little tremble from head to foot; it was this peculiarity that had won for him the expressive name of "Flutters" among the circus people. Now, of course, his state of mind was joyous and satisfied. Kind friends and a home in this new land! What more could be desired, and the happiest look played over his handsome face, for Flutters was handsome, and the dark olive complexion was most to be thanked for it; but the light went out of his face when, after a while, he glanced toward Starlight and saw his troubled look.

Instantly he divined its cause. "Are you sorry you took me?" he asked, coming to an abrupt standstill in the brier-hedged lane.

"No, not exactly;" Starlight was betrayed into a partial confession of the truth by the suddenness of the question.

Oh, how that hurt poor little Flutters, with his sensitive temperament!

"It is not too late," he said, turning and looking in the direction they had come; "I think I can find my way back. They'd never know I'd regular runned away;" but there was a mistiness in the bright little darkey eyes, and an actual ache in the poor little heart.

"Flutters, I am not sorry then," said Hazel, warmly; and laying a firm hand on each shoulder, she turned him right about face again in the direction of her own home. "Just you trust to me, Flutters, and you'll never be sorry you ran away from that miserable old circus—never."

And now, so completely was all gloom dispelled by these kind words, that back in a flash came the glad look into Flutter's face, and from that moment he was Hazel's sworn servant. Starlight looked rather ashamed of himself, but, after all, his fears had some foundation, and he was thankful enough thus to have Hazel take matters into her own hands, and more than share the responsibility. The sun was already down as the children neared the house, standing in clear-cut outline against the September sky. There were no clouds, only a marvellous gradation of color, shading imperceptibly from the dark, dark blue of the river and the hills beyond, up into the red glow of the sunset, and then again by some subtle transformation into a wonderful pale turquoise high overhead.

It was indeed a beautiful fall evening, and Captain and Mrs. Boniface and Josephine, seated on the wide, pillared porch, were waiting for the coming of the children, and the exciting narrative that was sure to follow. "Kate, the bonny-face baby," as they used to call her, was there too, a sunny, winsome little daughter, almost three years old, and Harry Avery besides, Job Starlight's cousin, a good-looking young fellow, and who lately had managed to spend a good deal of time at the Bonifaces. He had sailed over that morning from Paulus Hook (which, by the way, was the old name for Jersey City) with a fine little plan in mind for the day—a plan which he had already promised Hazel should some time be carried out; but the absence of the children had made it necessary to postpone it for at least twenty-four hours. This Harry Avery was the oldest of a varied assortment of little brothers, and his home was in New London, Connecticut. But two years before he had enlisted as a volunteer on board a brig named "The Fair American," and not one of the little brothers had ever had a sight of the big brother since. He had had a sorry enough time of it, too, for eighteen months of the twenty-four since he left home had been passed in the prison-ship "Jersey," and he had only been released within the last few weeks, when the success of the American armies compelled the English to discharge all their prisoners of war. The old ship where so many brave men had lost their lives by privation and disease now lay a great deserted hulk in the waters of Wallabout Bay, and what Harry had come over to propose was a sail over to

have a look at her. He knew it would interest the children immensely, and he had proposed to Mrs. Boniface that Josephine should go with them, and Josephine, only too glad to fall in with any plan that involved being out on the water, had that morning concocted some very delicious little iced cakes with a view to the luncheon they would take with them on the morrow. Meanwhile, the children were almost at the gate. "Why, there's Cousin Harry!" exclaimed Starlight, whose eyes were good at a long range.

"So it is," said Hazel, excitedly; and when they had passed a few steps farther on, she added, "Now, Flutters, this is the best place for you to stop, and remember, when you hear me call, come quick as anything." Flutters smiled assent, and stepped into the deeper shadow of one of the maples that edged the road.

"Well, here you are at last," called Captain Boniface a few moments later from where he sat smoking in a great easy-chair on the porch.

"Yes, here we are," answered Starlight, and they marched up the path and took their seats on the porch, Hazel having first kissed the family all round, not at all reluctantly including "Cousin Harry," for his prison experience made him a wonderful hero in her eyes.

Of course they right away began to give an account, interrupted by a good many questions, of all they had seen and done. Mrs. Boniface thought, and thought rightly, that she detected a little sense of disappointment in their description, but did not know that that was easily accounted for by the insight they had had into the inner workings of a circus. They had indeed been greatly impressed with the velvet and spangles, but only until they had learned through Flutters what heavy hearts velvet and spangles could cover.

Finally, at the close of quite a vivid description on Hazel's part of the grand entrance march, which had proved to both the children the most impressive feature, Harry Avery remarked, just by way of taking some part in the conversation, "that they ought to have brought a bit of the circus home with them for the benefit of people who had not been so fortunate as to see it." Could there have been a better opportunity for the introduction of Flutters?

"We did bring a bit of it home," cried Hazel; and then, stepping to the edge of the porch, she called, "*Flutters, Flutters,*" at the top of her strong little lungs. Of course the Bonifaces looked on



FLUTTERS'S INTRODUCTION TO THE FAMILY.

astonished at this performance, while Starlight, from suppressed excitement, bit his lip till he almost made the blood come; but in a second, head over heels in a series of somersaults up the path, bounded a remarkable little creature in satin slippers, velvet cap and all, as real a bit of a circus as Cousin Harry or any one else could have desired. The little tumbler was, of course, acting under orders, and brought up at the step of the porch with the most beaming smile imaginable, and a most gracious little bow.

"Come right up, Flutters," was Hazel's reassuring invitation, and nothing abashed, but still beaming and smiling, so great was his confidence in Hazel, Flutters mounted the steps, swung himself into the hammock that was strung across the porch, and drew the netted meshes close about him, as though conscious of the scarcity of his apparel.

There was a pause for a moment—that is, no word was spoken, but the four pairs of eyes belonging to Captain and Mrs. Boniface and Josephine and Harry were riveted upon Hazel, asking as plainly as words, "What does this mean?" while Starlight's eyes were urging her in an imploring fashion to tell about it all right away. As for Flutters, the complacent, trustful gaze with which he regarded his little benefactress implied that he was sure she would proceed to explain matters to the entire satisfaction of everybody. Meantime little Kate looked on in admiring wonder, but fortunately her pretty head did not need to trouble itself with "explanations of things." She only knew that that little fellow in the hammock was "awfully funny," and extended her pretty hands toward him as though she would very much like to touch him.

"Well," Hazel began at last with much the same air as a veritable showman, "this little boy is named Flutters, and he did belong to the circus, but he does not belong to it any more. He has run away, and we've helped him to do it. Somehow he's quite alone in the world, and he has to s'port himself, so he joined the circus 'cause he found he could do what the other tumblers did, and 'cause he heard they were coming to America. But he has not been at all happy in the circus," and Hazel, pausing a moment, looked toward Flutters for confirmation of this sad statement, and Flutters bore witness to its truth by gravely shaking his head from side to side. Indeed all through her narration it was most amusing

to watch his expression, so perfectly did it correspond with every word she spoke. Little folk and old folk have a fashion of letting each passing thought write itself legibly on the face. It is only the strong "in-between" folk who take great care that no one shall ever know what they chance to be thinking about.

By this time Starlight began to show a desire to take a share in the telling of the story, but Hazel would none of it. She thought, perhaps unjustly, that he had proved somewhat of a coward in the latter part of the transaction; at any rate, he himself had pushed her to the front, and there she meant to stay. "No, he has not been at all happy," she continued; "indeed, the manager has often been very cruel to him; but I will tell you about that another time" (for her eyes were growing a little tearful at the mere remembrance of some things Flutters had told them); "and the way we came to know about it was this: sometimes when Flutters takes a great jump from the spring-board and turns a somersault two times in the air, he slips his knee-cap—that's what you call it, Flutters, isn't it?" (Flutters nodded yes), "and then he has to slip it back again himself, and it hurts a good deal, so that he can't jump any more for a while. Well, to-day he slipped it, and then he crawled over underneath where we sat, and we talked with him a little; then Starlight told him to creep under the benches when no one was looking, and Starlight dropped down between the seats and talked with him some more."

"And then *we* arranged," Starlight now interrupted in such an unmistakably determined manner that Hazel allowed him to continue, "how he should run away, and he didn't even go back for his clothes, because he says that the manager can almost see what a fellow's thinking about, and he didn't dare. So when we had fixed everything I climbed up to Hazel and told her what she was to do, and then I dropped down again, and Flutters put on Hazel's cloak so as to cover him up a little, and we scooted. We came near being found out once, but we got over the great fence safe at last and into Beekman's woods. There Hazel was to meet us with some of Hans Van Wyck's clothes, if she could get them."

"And I did get them," chimed in Hazel, for it was surely her turn once more, "and—but, oh!" stopping suddenly, "the clothes! Starlight, do hurry and get them, or some one coming along the

road may run off with them." Starlight obeyed, frightened enough at the thought of the possible loss of the borrowed articles, and quickly returning with them to the great relief of both Hazel and himself.

Then the story went on again, turn and turn about, Flutters gaining courage to join in now and then, till at last, when the twilight had given place to the sort of half darkness of a starlight night, and the fire-flies were flashing their little lanterns on every side, they had told all there was to tell, and three foot-sore little people confessed they were tired and sleepy and hungry, and glad enough to go indoors and do justice to a most inviting little supper, which Josephine had slipped away some time before to prepare.

"Bonny Kate" (as she was called more than half the time, after a certain wilful but very charming young woman in one of Shakespeare's great plays) had long ago fallen asleep, and lay just where her mother, running indoors for a moment, had stowed her away in a corner of the great hair-cloth sofa in the dining-room. One pretty hand was folded under her rosy cheek, and such a merry smile played over her sweet face! She surely must have been dreaming of a remarkable little fellow, in beautiful velvet and spangles, coming head over heels up a garden path.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN BONIFACE RECEIVES AN ANGRY LETTER.



IT is one thing to help a much-abused and unhappy little member of a circus troupe to run away from his unhappy surroundings; it is quite another thing to provide for all his future, particularly if, like Flutters, he has not a penny to his name nor a stitch to his back, none more serviceable, that is, than the ring costume of a high and lofty tumbler. And so it was that Mrs. Boniface and Josephine and Harry sat up well into the night, laughing heartily now and then over the funny side of the children's adventure, but talking gravely

enough most of the time of its more serious side.

"As far as I can make out," said Harry, "Starlight rather expected to bring Flutters over to the farm to-morrow and ask Aunt Frances to care for him, at least till he found somebody else who would. I imagine his heart rather failed him later, as it ought to. Aunt Frances has enough to bother her at present."

"But you don't blame the children for helping the poor little fellow, do you?" said Josephine, warmly; "I think almost any one would have done the same thing under the same circumstances."

"Very likely, Miss Josephine, but that doesn't dispose of the troublesome question, What is now to be done with him?"

"Unfortunately, there are questions to be met more troublesome than that," said Captain Boniface, joining for the first time in the conversation, and he had only too good reason for speaking as he did. Early in the evening a letter had been brought him, to which no one had paid any attention. It was a daily occurrence for a messenger to turn in at the gate with a note*for the Captain, since he had been for the last eight years the principal furnisher of supplies to the English soldiers stationed in the city, and had need both to write and receive many letters. Indeed, so loyal had he been to King George that, at the very commencement of the Revolution, he had joined the English army, but had had the misfortune to be very seriously wounded in the first battle that was fought. When at last, after weeks of constant suffering, he was able to be moved, General Gage, under whom he served, had contrived to send him home by easy stages along the Boston post-road, under protection of an English escort; and Captain Boniface always declared, and no doubt he was right about it, that nothing short of his wife's careful nursing would ever have brought him through. But after that it was out of the question for him to rejoin the army, so he must needs stay quietly at home and aid the King's cause as best he could by helping to feed the King's soldiers. All this, of course, had made enemies of most of the Captain's old friends—Harry Avery was almost the only exception; and now that the Colonies had been successful, matters were looking pretty serious for him and for every American who had sided with the King. The note that had just been brought to him proved a very threatening one. It as much as ordered him to leave the country, saying "that there was but one safe course for him and his, and that was to be gone instantly; that New York had no further use for him; that the sooner her streets and coffee-houses were rid of him the better, and that he would simply be taking his life in his hands if he stayed." It was truly a terribly alarming letter, but Captain Boniface, knowing that sooner or later his wife and Josephine would have to know about it, now broke in upon the conversation and read it to them.

"Who has dared to write you that?" asked Mrs. Boniface.

"Four old friends, Mary; that is the saddest part of it."

Mrs. Boniface could hardly believe she heard aright, as Jose-

phine, taking the letter from her father's hand, read the names aloud.

Mrs. Boniface sat pale and silent, looking straight before her, and not hearing another word that was said. She knew her husband well enough to feel assured that no such letter would move him a step from his home. Not he! He would remain and live the bitter persecution down. But would he be allowed to live it down? There were cruel words in that letter. "By remaining you simply take your life in your hands," it said, and the terrible threat sent all sorts of dread possibilities thronging through her mind.

With anxious faces, and quick-beating hearts, Josephine and her mother listened, as Harry Avery and the Captain talked late into the night. It was a great comfort to realize that although Harry was a Whig, and a strong one, too, he did not harbor any bitter feeling against them. "Perhaps," thought Josephine gladly, "there are others like him."

It seemed as though Harry must have seen the gratitude in her expressive eyes, as he continued again and again to reassure the Captain of his full sympathy, and his determination to be of assistance to him in every possible way.

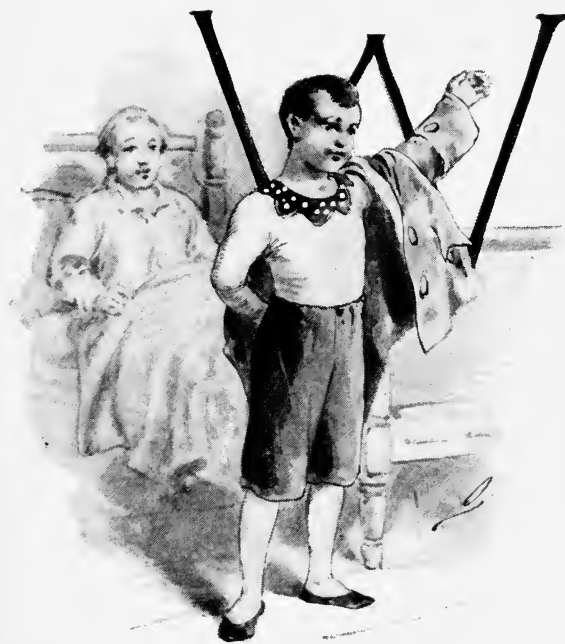
"Well, what will you do about it, father?" Josephine asked, as, just at midnight, she leaned over his chair to say good-night.

"Do about it, child?" he said, taking her hands in both of his, "Why, stay just where I am!"

Mrs. Boniface shook her head gravely, as she and Josephine left the room together. She had known so well beforehand that he would say exactly that.

CHAPTER VI.

OFF FOR THE PRISON-SHIP.



WHAT a queer sort of thing it is, this regularly going to sleep and waking up again once in every twenty-four hours; but people who have had a little experience in not going to sleep regularly, and in waking up at most unheard-of and irregular hours, will tell you that that experience is a deal queerer, and not so pleasant by half. Some of the little folk who have need to be coaxed and urged to bed six nights out of the seven, would hardly dare to fret, I imagine, if they only knew that

to be a sound sleeper is an accomplishment sorely envied by some of those grown-up people who may sit up as late as they choose. And if one of those wakeful, grown-up people should some day ask you, "What is the secret of your sound sleeping, my little friend?" just tell them that you think it is because you do not worry. Then if they say, "That's all very well; children have no need to worry, they have fathers and mothers to lean upon;" tell them that they, too, have a Father, One far more

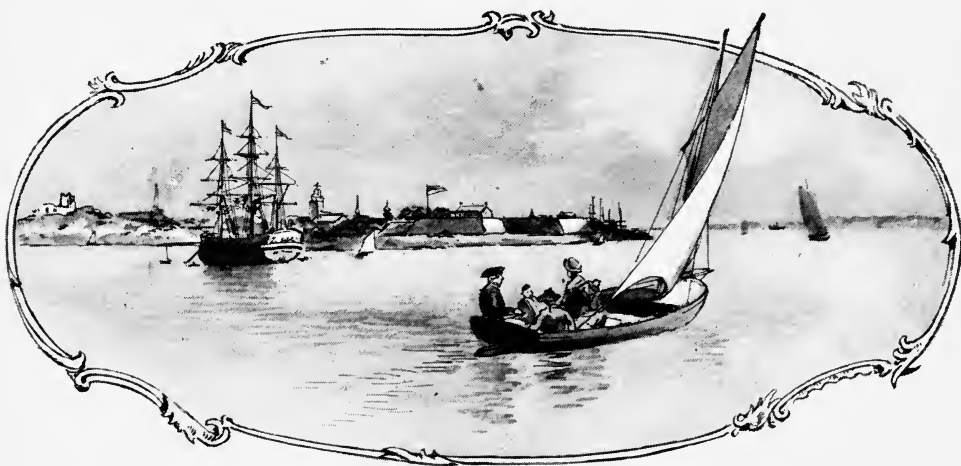
kind and loving than any earthly father, and that they could lie down at night as free from worry as any child if they would; and who knows but they will learn a blessed lesson from you that will be well worth the learning.

Now this little reverie has all been suggested by the fact that the Boniface household was waking up, all save old Dinah, the cook, for she had been up for an hour or more. She had once been Hazel's nurse, and, since the beginning of the war, was the only servant the Bonifaces could afford to keep. How comfortable she made them, that faithful old Dinah, so that all one had to do was to waken and wash, and brush and dress, and then sit down to steaming coffee, delicate rolls, and the most savory little rasher of bacon, which Dinah always added as a "relisher," as she called it, to the more substantial part of the breakfast. Yes, they were waking, all of them, from anxious Captain Boniface to happy little Flutters, for Dinah's vigorous ringing of the rising bell had thoroughly done its work.

Each busy brain was taking up again the manifold threads of thought which had slipped from its hold when sleep had stolen across it so gently the night before. Captain Boniface instantly remembered the angry letter, as, of course, did Mrs. Boniface and Josephine, and so their waking was rather heavy hearted. Harry instantly remembered it too, but his second thought was of the pretty sail-boat moored down at the Boniface wharf, and of the plan for the day, and he was glad to open his eyes on blue skies and the sunshine that flooded his eastward room. Flutters woke with a smile. Indeed, he doubted if he should ever do anything but smile again, so sure was he that he had turned a very happy corner in his life. Starlight roomed with Flutters, and his first thought when he opened his eyes was how they were to manage to return those clothes of Hans Van Wyck's, that Flutters was getting into with such an air of complacent ownership. Hazel's little mind took its first morning flight in the same direction as Harry Avery's. The sail-boat, the bay sparkling in the sunshine, the visit to the old prison-ship—it all meant so much to her enthusiastic, pleasure-loving temperament. A certain uncomfortable and premeditated call upon Colonel Hamilton could easily be postponed to an indefinite future, with such delightful anticipations in the definite present.

"It seems heartless to be going off for a day's jaunt, when father has so much to trouble him," Josephine said, when, soon after breakfast, the little party of five, basketed and equipped, were starting down to the wharf.

"Not at all, Josephine," answered her sweet-faced mother, holding bonny Kate by the hand as she spoke. "We will try and keep dear old papa cheery, won't we, little daughter?" then, seeing that Josephine still lingered, as though reluctant to go, she added, cheerily, "nothing would be gained by your staying, Josephine.



SAILING OUT TO THE "JERSEY."

Your father has some office work that will keep him in the house, so you can think of him as safe at home all day, and we are both of us glad enough to have you enjoy a little change." So, somewhat relieved in her mind, Josephine hurried down and joined the others, and soon the "Gretchen," with her white sail spread to the crisp morning breeze, sped out on the river, fairly dancing along the crests of the white caps that splashed against her prow with such a continuous and merry little thump and splutter.

Wind and tide favored them, and Harry was an excellent sailor, so that in a comparatively short time they had left the waters of the Hudson behind them, had rounded Fort George, the Battery

of to-day, and were headed up the East River, with New York on the one side, and the then scattered town of Brooklyn on the other. Skilfully tacking in long slants from shore to shore, the wharves and shipping were soon exchanged for the sloping banks of Manhattan Island on the left, and of Long Island on the right, and then suddenly the dismasted hulk of the old "Jersey" loomed up before them.

She was a dreary enough looking object to any one, but if, like Harry, you had been a prisoner aboard of her for eighteen long months, you would, like him, no doubt, have shuddered at the sight of her. Josephine shuddered too. "Oh, do not let us go any nearer!" she said.

"All right," was Harry's quick response, for, in point of fact, nothing pleased him better than to comply with Josephine's slightest wish, so the "Gretchen" veered off again.

"Oh! can't we go aboard?" cried Flutters, with a world of disappointment in his tone, for in imagination he had already scaled the gangway ladder that hung at her larboard side, and turned more than one somersault on the wide sweep of her upper deck.

"Why, no, child!" answered Hazel, who was fast assuming a most patronizing air toward her little protégé; "no one would think of going *aboard* of her, would they, Cousin Harry?"

"Why, why not?" Flutters asked, half-impatiently, for Harry, giving his attention for the moment to the management of the boat, did not at once reply.

"Because," he said, finally, "there has been far too much sickness in that old hulk for any one to safely venture aboard of her; she has been responsible for the lives of eleven thousand men. I doubt if the strongest and longest of north winds could ever blow her free from the fever that must be lurking in her rotten timbers."

That was a new phase of the matter to Flutters, and he subsided at once into thoughtful silence.

"I think this would be a good place to anchor," suggested Harry, but waited a moment till Josephine had given her consent before letting the anchor run the length of its rope and bury itself in the mud bottom beneath them.

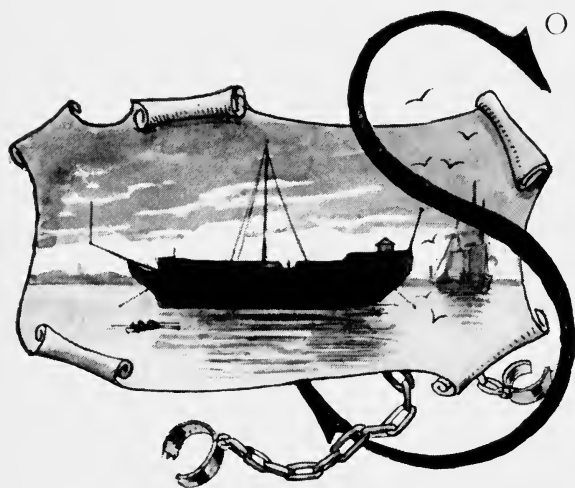
As soon as the "Gretchen" had settled into the position determined for her by the tide, the little party of five ranged themselves

about the boat, so as to be as comfortable as possible, for there they meant to stay for the next hour, or two, or three, as the case might be. It had been for some time a thoroughly understood matter between Hazel and Harry Avery, that whenever the day should come for this trip to the "Jersey," they were to anchor their boat in *full sight* of her, and *then* and *there* he was to tell them the "whole story"—from the day he volunteered till the day of his release in the previous summer.

Flutters, who had been made acquainted with the object of the expedition, waited, with a charming native sense of the "fitness of things," until the others had chosen their places; then he threw himself at Harry's feet, in one of the graceful positions so natural to him, and which even Hans Van Wyck's rough, homespun clothes did not altogether succeed in hiding. It was wonderful to look into Flutters's upturned face—such complete satisfaction, such tranquil happiness shone out of it. Even in those exciting moments when every nerve and tissue was thrilling under Harry's narration of the dark features of his prison life, a smile still seemed to be lurking in the corners of his expressive mouth. Yesterday, a lonely little tumbler in a dreary, tawdry circus company; to-day, one of a blessed circle of warm-hearted friends. Whatever fears others might have as to the disposal to be made of him, Flutters had none for himself. Of course he was to be Hazel's faithful little servant from that day forward, and it was almost worth while, he thought, to have "darkey blood" in one's veins for the sake of rendering such happy service. Farther than that he did not trouble himself, literally taking no thought for the morrow, nor for what he should put on when his present habiliments should have found their way back to their rightful owner. The "Gretchen's" little company made a pretty picture against the blue gray of the bay, and when at last there was no more arranging to be done, and all had repeatedly declared themselves "perfectly comfortable," there was a breathless, momentous little pause, as in the moment at a play between the significant and abrupt cessation of the orchestra and the rolling back of the curtain. "*Please* begin," said Hazel, with a great sigh, as though the intense anticipation of that supreme moment was quite too heavy for child-nature to endure, and Harry, looking sadly over to the old "Jersey," commenced his story.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY'S STORY.



O I am to begin, Hazel, and at the very beginning, too, if I keep my promise. Well, this little chapter of my life began with a thought, as happens with most everything that is done in this world, and the thought was not one I had reason to be very proud of. I suppose all of you know, even Flutters, that since the commencement of the Revolution American vessels

have been cruising about, hoping to capture English vessels.

"Now it chanced about two years ago that the 'Hannah,' a very rich prize, was brought into New London. Some of the men who had taken part in her capture had sailed out of New London as poor as could be, and here they came sailing back again, with a prize in tow rich enough to fill all their empty pockets. So it was not strange, perhaps, that the capture of the 'Hannah' turned a good many young heads, nor that mine turned with the rest, and that, as soon as possible, I joined the crew of the 'Venture,' a privateer that was being rapidly fitted out for a cruise. At length everything was in readiness, and away we sailed with the highest hopes, and with our pretty brig so crowded with musketry that

when in action she looked like a great flame of fire. Well, we were not long at sea before we gave chase to an English ship, in appearance as large as ours. We exchanged a few shots, then we ran alongside of her, and with one salute of all our fire put her to silence, and fortunately, too, without losing a single life. I can tell you I was a happy fellow, Hazel (Harry seemed to consider Hazel his chief listener), when it fell to my lot to be one of the crew who were ordered to man the prize and bring her into port; happy I was, and as proud as a turkey-cock; but that state of things did not last very long. It was our purpose not to attempt to make a landing until we should reach New Bedford; but before we had even cleared the shores of Long Island an English ship of war, the 'Belisarius,' of twenty-six guns, bore down upon us, and in less than an hour from the time she had sighted us, those of our number left on the 'Venture,' and those of us who had manned the English brig were all prisoners together and in irons in her hold."

"Bless my stars! were you really?" exclaimed Flutters, quite unprepared for this turn of affairs.

"Yes, Flutters, sixty-five of us, and on our way to the old prison-ship, yonder."

"How many did you say?" asked Hazel. She had been thinking she must teach Flutters not to say "Bless my stars!" and things like that, and so her attention had wandered for a moment.

"Sixty-five, and in less than five months we were reduced to thirty-five."

"Did thirty die?" she asked, incredulously.

"Yes, thirty did die," interrupted Starlight, setting his lips firmly, for he knew what he was talking about, "and you old English as good as murdered them."

"Starlight, don't you dare to speak like that to me," was Hazel's quick retort, while the blood flashed hotly into her face. Flutters gazed at her with astonishment. Perhaps, thought he, it will not always be an easy matter, after all, for even the most faithful of body-servants to please such a spirited little mistress.

"Good for you, Hazel," laughed Harry; "I would not stand such incivility either, if I were you; but then I must tell you one thing, not all English hearts are as kind as yours and Josephine's. If they were, the old 'Jersey' would not have so sorrowful a tale to

tell." Harry paused a moment. Starlight and Hazel were feeling a trifle uncomfortable. They could not resist the temptation to give each other a little home-thrust now and then on the score of their political differences. The result, as a rule, was a half-acknowledged admiration for each other's patriotism, and an extra touch of mutual consideration in word and manner for the time being.

"Flutters," said Hazel, solemnly, perhaps by way of disposing of the pause that seemed to reflect somewhat upon the conduct of herself and Starlight, "Flutters, *what* are *you*?" Flutters looked down at his queer little Dutch outfit, and then up at Hazel, with a smile, which said as plainly as words, "I give it up."

"I mean," continued Hazel, "who do you side with? Are you a stanch little Loyalist like me? That is, do you think, as I think, that it is very wrong to take up arms against the King?"

Flutters was lying flat in the bottom of the boat now, his dark little face propped between the palms of his hands, at a loss to know how to answer. He was a trifle embarrassed by the directness of Hazel's question.

"I would rather side with you, Miss Hazel," he replied, at last, "a sight rather; but mulatto boys what has passed most of their time in a circus don't know much 'bout those things. I'm going to hear Mr. Harry out, and then I'll make up my mind."

"Very well," Hazel replied, with chilling dignity; "please go on," she added, turning to Harry.

Harry hesitated a moment, evidently trying to recall just where he had left off.

"You were in irons on the 'Belisarius,'" suggested Josephine, whose thoughts, judging from the far-away look in her eyes, had been with the poor prisoners all the while rather than with what had been going on about her.

"Oh, yes, there we were! and fortunately with no idea of the suffering in store for us. Early the next morning we were led on deck. The 'Belisarius' had dropped anchor over yonder (pointing to the New York shore), and two boats were coming toward us, for she had signalled the 'Jersey' that she had prisoners to transfer. Oh, how our hearts sank within us as the little boats that were to carry us came nearer and nearer, and do you wonder, children, that



HARRY'S STORY.

we dreaded to board the old craft? Did you ever see a drearier-looking object, with never so much as a spar or a mast to remind you of the real use of a vessel? Even her lion figure-head had been taken away, leaving nothing but an unsightly old hulk, and yet I believe the Englishmen who were in charge of her thought the place, wretched as it was, too good for us. It seemed we were not even to be treated with the consideration due to prisoners of a war with a foreign nation. Having risen against the Mother Country, in their eyes we were simply traitors. Hopeless and despairing we were rowed over to the old prison, marched up the gangway ladder, ordered down the hatchway, and then, with the brutal exclamation, 'There, rebels! there is the cage for you,' we found ourselves prisoners in the midst of a very wretched company."

The story was growing pretty painful, and likely to grow still more so, provided Harry told them *all*, as he had promised. Besides, it was so terribly real, sitting there aboard of the "Gretchen" with the old "Jersey" right before them.

By way of affording a little relief from what she felt was yet to be told, Josephine asked: "What was that canvas-covered place there in the stern used for?"

"Oh, that was a shelter put up for the guards on the quarter-deck. Just below that, and reaching from the bulkhead of the quarter-deck to the fore-castle, was what they called the spar-deck, and it was there that we were allowed to take such exercise as we could. We used to walk in platoons facing the same way, and then all turn at once, so as to make the most of the little space. The gun-room, right under the quarter-deck, was where I was imprisoned, and it was a trifle more comfortable there, if you can use that word in connection with anything on the 'Jersey,' than the crowded place between decks where most of the prisoners were herded together. I had fortunately been chosen second mate on the English brig during the little while that we were masters of it, and to that lucky fact I owed my assignment to the gun-room with the other officers. But for that, I do not believe I should be here to-day to tell the story. I do not see how I could have endured any more and lived. As it was, you know, I was very ill."

"Yes, I know," said Hazel, laying her hand affectionately over one of Harry's and looking sympathetically into his face; "perhaps

you had better not say very much about that part. Josephine and I cry very easy ; don't we, Josephine ?”

“ Then please don't, Harry,” urged Starlight ; “ I'd rather have a good thrashing any time than see a girl cry,” recalling one occasion in particular, when his own misconduct had moved Hazel to tears, and she had refused for the space of one long half hour to be in any-wise comforted.

Flutters had not paid the least attention to this last interruption. He was thinking that, after all, the life of a friendless little circus performer, sorry and comfortless and forlorn as it was, might be less full of hardship than a prisoner's. It was a very grand thing to have one's freedom, and he had always had that—that is, he might at any time have run away if he chose.

“ What did they give you to eat, Mr. Harry ?” he asked, by way of comparing bills of fare.

“ Little that was fit to eat, Flutters ; but I can tell you exactly if you would like to know,” and Harry drew from his pocket-book a scrap of folded paper. “ This was our list of supplies. I wrote it down the first week on board, and knew it quite by heart all too soon. I think I could repeat it now.”

“ Suppose you try,” and Josephine taking the paper from his hand, Harry at once began to recite, with the satisfied air of a child that perfectly knows its lesson :

“ *On Sunday.*—1 pound of biscuit, 1 pound of pork, and 1½ pint of peas.

“ *On Monday.*—1 pound of biscuit, 1 pint of oatmeal, 2 ounces butter.

“ *On Tuesday.*—1 pound of biscuit, 2 pounds beef.

“ *On Wednesday.*—1½ pounds of flour and 2 ounces suet.

“ *On Thursday.*—Same as Sunday.

“ *On Friday.*—Same as Monday.

“ *On Saturday.*—Same as Tuesday.

“ There, how is that ?” he asked, “ any mistakes ?”

“ Not one,” answered Josephine ; “ but really, Harry, is that all you received ?”

“ Why,” exclaimed Flutters, “ seems to me that's consid'able. Circus folks often don't fare no better than that, and don't get things so reg'lar, either.”

"And yet, Flutters, that is only two-thirds of the allowance of an English seaman. However, we would have managed well enough to exist if the things had been good in themselves or decently cooked, but all the provisions were of so wretched a quality that many a poor 'Jersey' prisoner died from starvation through sheer inability to eat them."

"Who cooked the things for you?" asked Hazel.

"Whenever we could manage, Hazel, we cooked them ourselves. Do you see that big derrick on the starboard side? Well, that was for taking in water, and we each had a scanty allowance of so much and no more each day. But, as a rule, we contrived to save a little of it with which to do our own cooking, because only the toughest men on board could so much as swallow the food prepared by the ship's cook. Under the forecastle, there in the bow, hangs a great copper divided in the middle and holding two or three hogs-heads of water. In one side they cooked the meat, in the other the peas and oatmeal—sometimes, I believe, in salt water, but always in water so stale as to be absolutely unfit for use. So five or six of us would club together, each contributing our portion of water to the cooking supply, and then, by begging a little wood from the cook, now and then, and splitting it very carefully and economically with our knives, we could manage to keep a fire going that would soon set our little pots boiling. It was a great day for us, I remember, when a tangle of driftwood came bumping against the ship's side, and we were allowed to haul it on board for our fires."

"It must have been very hard only now and then to have had a little butter for the biscuit," remarked Hazel, to whom this particular feature of Harry's story appealed most pathetically, so very fond was her own little ladyship of the variety and sufficiency of a well-appointed table.

"But the butter was not forthcoming, Hazel; they gave us rancid sweet-oil instead, which refused to pass muster with our Yankee palates, so that we were able to bestow a double portion upon some poor Frenchmen, who were very grateful for it."

Flutters had changed his mind about the adequacy of the "Jersey's" bill of fare, and was growing not a little indignant over Harry's narration.

"Miss Hazel," he said, while the color flashed through his dark skin, "I am siding with the Yankees very fast."

"I do not blame you very much, Flutters; I never heard of anything like it;" which was quite a concession for so loyal a little Red-Coat as Hazel.

"But, Harry," asked Josephine, who could scarcely bear to hear of such barbarous treatment at the hands of her own kinsmen, "do you think King George and the English nation, generally, knew about it?"

"No, I don't, nor do I believe they know it now; but they will some day. It was their business to know it, Josephine, and not to leave thousands of human beings at the mercy of a few merciless British seamen. Your own father would scarcely credit all I could tell him of our treatment, nor many another English officer; but it was the clear duty of some of them to have looked into the matter."

"You don't mean it was my papa's duty, do you?" Hazel asked, bristling up a little; she was not going to allow even "Cousin Harry" to utter a word that would seem to reflect upon her father even for a moment.

"No, of course, I don't mean anything of the kind. If I thought Captain Boniface in any way responsible for those horrors, do you think I could be on such friendly terms with him? No, Hazel, your father is a true, brave man, and no one knows better than I how much he has given up in King George's service. It was not his duty to inspect the prison-ships. Furnishing supplies for the English troops called for every moment of his thought and time, and taxed all his strength and energy; but there are some men—men whom your father knows—whose names we need not mention, who *are* very culpable in the matter, if you know what that means?"

"I suppose it means very much to blame," sighed Hazel.

"Oh, I wish you would just go on telling about things!" urged Flutters, beseechingly, for to him the story itself was far more interesting than any side remarks.

Harry remained silent a moment. Since Josephine and Hazel "cried very easy," he had need to be careful just where he began again. "I must not forget to tell you," he said, "something about

'Dame Grant,' as we called her, for her visits to the old 'Jersey' constituted almost our greatest blessing. She was a fat old woman, who dealt in sugar and tea, pipes and combs, needles and pins, and a few other of the necessities of life. Every day or two her little boat would push out from the Brooklyn shore, and, rowed by two boys, over she would come to the ship's side. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have any money were then allowed to go to the foot of the ladder and make some little purchases, obtaining everything—so she always assured us—'at cost price.' But sometimes I was almost sorry that I had a cent to spend. It was so terrible to see the longing in the faces of the poor fellows who had no money. I will say this much in our favor, however; I think there was hardly a man among us who did not share with some one else fully half of whatever he had bought. But suddenly the visits came to an end. One morning the little boat put out from the shore as usual, but with no one in it save one of the boys who used to row it, and he brought us the sad news that the old 'Dame' had caught the fever from the hulk of the 'Jersey' and died. After that no one else was ever willing to run the risk of contagion for the sake of the profits of our little purchases. But one of the happiest experiences that ever came to us in those long, dreary days, was to be allowed to become a member of the 'Working Party.' It was composed of twenty men, and all the prisoners who had any strength left were always eager to join it. It was the duty of these men to wash down the upper deck and gangway, to spread the awning, and to hoist wood, water, and other supplies on board, from the boats that came alongside. Then, in the case of any deaths—and there were often three or four during a single night—some of the party would be assigned the duty of burial, and sent to the shore for that purpose, but always closely watched by two or three guards. Strange as it may seem, this sad duty was considered the most desirable of all. It meant setting one's foot on dear old Mother Earth again, for, at least, a little while, and even the mournful work in hand could not quite offset that pleasure. Only once was I so fortunate as to be chosen, and so keen was my delight in treading the ground again, that I actually took off my shoes for the sake of feeling the sand fall away from my feet as we pushed along with our sad burden. Now and then it would happen that,

notwithstanding the watchfulness of the guards, a prisoner would succeed in making his escape when sent ashore with one of these interment parties. Near the spot where most of the 'Jersey's' prisoners were buried was a comfortable homestead belonging to a miller. The men used to call it the 'Old Dutchman's,' and always looked toward it with a sort of veneration as they passed, particularly as they knew that the miller's daughter was deeply interested in us. She kept account of all the poor fellows who were brought to the shore to be buried, and I think many of us cherished a vain sort of hope that deliverance might possibly come through her some day."

"That was strange about caring to feel the sand against your feet," remarked Starlight; "that is the last sort of thing you'd think a fellow would ever really care for."

"Very likely; but if you ever spend even a month on shipboard you'll find yourself longing for some of the things that you never so much as gave a thought to while you had them. Why, when the men returned to the 'Jersey' from the shore they would take back with them as much common turf as they could carry, and the little fragments would be greedily sought for and inhaled with more pleasure than if they had had the fragrance of a rose."

"Did they pay you in any way for the work?" asked Flutters, still anxious to compare experiences.

"Not in money, of course, Flutters, but we had the privilege of going on deck early in the morning, and were allowed to stay till sunset. All the other prisoners were ordered down to the foul air between decks two hours earlier, there to stay, come what would, for ten wretched hours, with the iron gratings of the hatchways firmly fastening them in. Then we were granted a full allowance of provisions, such as they were."

"Tell about when all the 'Venture's' crew were at last exchanged excepting you and Tom Burnham," suggested Starlight, in a pause that offered.

"No, don't, please," Josephine exclaimed; "we all know about that, and it was so very dreadful. Besides, it's all right now."

"What," said Flutters, eagerly, sitting bolt upright—"what's that? I don't know about it."

"I'll tell you," Hazel whispered, motioning him closer to her;

meanwhile Harry pointed out different parts of the ship in answer to certain questions of Josephine's.

"You see," explained Hazel in a melodramatic whisper, "that Cousin Harry was taken sick one day very suddenly, and then he had the fever so badly that he was carried over to Blackwell's Island to die. But he didn't die."

"Didn't he, really?" asked Flutters, mischievously.

"I wouldn't joke about a thing like this, Flutters. No, he didn't die; but while he was getting well very slowly a cartel—that's a kind of boat—was sent from New London, with some English prisoners on board, to exchange for the crew of the 'Venture;' but there were not quite as many English prisoners as were needed for an exchange, so they decided they would have to leave Cousin Harry and a friend of his, Tom Burnham, who were sick over on the island, behind, and as soon afterward as those two poor fellows were well enough, back they had to go again to that dreadful old 'Jersey.' Wasn't that pretty hard?"

"Gosh, yes," exclaimed inelegant little Flutters, and Hazel excused the word because the occasion seemed to demand something strong.

"And there they stayed, Flutters, one whole year longer, till last August, when the English had to let all their prisoners go free; but understand, Flutters, it was just those *few* bad men in charge of the 'Jersey' who were so cruel. In other places we did not treat our prisoners badly at all. Besides, it was very wicked indeed to take arms against the King, though, of course, men like Cousin Harry thought they were doing right." Hazel, as usual, wound up with a defence of her own loyalist principles.

And so the story of Harry's hard prison life was all told, or, rather, as much of it as was suited to his audience or was not too heartrending, and at once the little party agreed to weigh anchor and sail quite out of sight of the dreary old ship before opening the well-filled luncheon baskets stowed away in the "Gretchen's" narrow hold.

And then, of course, every one kept on the lookout for the best point to come to anchor again; but Flutters was the first to discover a most attractive spot on the New York side of the river, where some fine old trees grew close to its edge, and already

cast their shadows far enough out on the water to shade the "Gretchen" from bow to stern. Thither they sailed, quickly dropped anchor, and soon sitting down to cold tongue and biscuits, peach jam and sponge cake, endeavored to banish all thoughts of prisoners and prison-ships. It was not hard work, for Flutters was funny, and Starlight and Hazel actually silly. Indeed, all of them felt a sort of reaction from the gloomy, depressing thoughts of the last hour, and, to my thinking, a little silliness was perfectly allowable. After a most leisurely luncheon, Hazel and Starlight moved to the stern of the boat. There was one important matter they had need to discuss confidentially—the return of Hans's clothes. Hazel had not forgotten her promise to surely bring them back to Mrs. Van Wyck the next day; and now the next day had come, and with no better prospect of any other equipment for Flutters. Entirely unconcerned, Flutters, growing drowsy in the noontide stillness of the river, had stretched his lithe little body along one of the boat cushions and fallen asleep. Josephine, after stowing away the emptied baskets, had seated herself again with her back against the mast. Harry had moved to a seat by her side, and they were talking together of what filled both their hearts—their anxiety for Captain Boniface; and Harry was doing his best to calm Josephine's fears. He spoke most cheerily and hopefully, for he honestly did not believe the antagonism against her father would amount to so very much; and watching her lovely face brighten at his encouraging words, no doubt thought how very beautiful she was. You would have thought so too could you have seen her, with her wide-brimmed hat pushed far back on her head, and the airiest of little breezes playing with the pretty light hair that lay in curling wisps about her forehead. Starlight happened to glance toward Josephine just as he and Hazel had settled the matter they had in hand, and seemed more impressed with her beauty, as she sat there, than ever before.

"You don't often find a girl like your sister Josephine," he said; "she's lovely herself, and she's lovely to look at. Those two things don't generally go together—in girls."

"What do you mean?" asked Hazel, bristling a little, as usual.

"I mean that most lovely girls know that they're lovely, and that spoils it. The good-natured girls are most always homely."

"Am I?"

"No, of course, you're not homely, Hazel, but then you're not"—a long pause—"so very good-natured either;" Starlight's love of mischief having gotten the better of his discretion.

Hazel gave him one look of indignant condemnation. Then, without a word, she moved away, took her seat at Josephine's feet, and for the remainder of the afternoon treated Starlight with all the studied coolness offended dignity could muster.

About four o'clock the "Gretchen" again weighed anchor and steered out into the river, homeward bound. It had been arranged that she should touch at the foot of Beekman Street, and that Starlight should leave them there, so as to stop at Mrs. Van Wyck's and see what could be done about Flutters's clothes, or rather Hans's; and from there he would no doubt be able to beg a ride out to the Bonifaces'. "Good-bye, Hazel," he called back, as he bounded on to the little wharf. Hazel vouchsafed no answer. Josephine wondered what was up, and so did Harry, but were wise enough not to ask any questions. Flutters was not so wise. "Miss Hazel, did you hear Starlight call good-bye?" he queried.

"I'm not deaf, Flutters."

"Then why didn't you answer?" with innocent directness.

"I had my own good reasons. And, Flutters, *you* must not ever ask *me why* I do things."

"All right, Miss Hazel," Flutters answered cheerily, for her word was law to him; but Josephine and Harry found it difficult to conceal a smile.

It proved rather a tedious sail homeward, for the wind that had blown them so finely down river in the morning had not been so accommodating as to change its direction, and only by dint of much "tacking" was any headway to be made. At last, however, the Boniface homestead came in sight, and in the stillness of the twilight the "Gretchen" was safely moored to her own little dock.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CALL ON COLONEL HAMILTON.



GOOD-BYE, Hazel," "Good-bye, Starlight," "Good-bye, Josephine," "Good-bye, Cousin Harry," "Good-bye, Flutters." Quite a medley of good-byes, to be sure, but no more than were needed, for Harry and Starlight, once more aboard of the "Gretchen," were fast gliding out on to the river, and Josephine and Hazel and Flutters were being left behind on the wharf. The little prison-ship party had had their supper, and now Harry and Starlight were off for Paulus Hook; it was high time, too, that they were, since they had already been absent a day longer than Harry had planned, and Aunt Frances would naturally begin to feel worried. Little Flutters cut a queer figure as he stood there on the floating dock in the moonlight. Hans Van Wyck's clothes, done up in a snug bundle, were already on their way back to their lawful owner, so that he had need to resort once more to the spangles and tinsel of his circus costume. By way of making up for insufficient clothing, Mrs. Boniface had thrown a shawl about him, one end of which Flutters allowed to trail behind, pinning the

other close about his throat, with one corner thrown over his left shoulder.

"We must do something about some clothes for you, Flutters, right away," Hazel remarked, as they turned to walk up from the wharf, when, amid the darkening shadows of the river, the "Gretchen's" sail was no longer visible. "Starlight and I *hoped* Mrs. Van Wyck would offer to *give* us that suit of Hans's to keep when he stopped to see her this afternoon and told her about you, but she did not propose anything of the kind. She only said 'it was very inconvenient for Hans not to have them, and she hoped we'd manage to get them back to-night.'"

"And you have managed, haven't you, Miss Hazel?" Flutters answered, as if the managing were a matter to be proud of; and, mimicking a sort of stage stride such as he had often witnessed in tragical circus pantomimes, he apparently bestowed far more attention on the sweep of his majestic train than on what Hazel was saying.

"Yes, of course, I sent them back; what else could I do?"—this last rather impatiently, because of Flutters's exasperating unconcern—"but how are you going to manage without them is what I'd like to know."

Flutters gave Hazel a comical little look. "With tights and shawls, I s'pose, Miss Hazel, unless the Captain felt like as he could buy some for me."

"No," said Hazel decidedly; "I am not going to bother father 'bout things like that, 'specially now when he's so worried and his life's in danger." This remark brought Flutters to a stand. "Is the Captain's life in danger, really, Miss Hazel?"

"Yes, it is. Josephine said he received a very angry letter the other night from some old friends of his. They as much as told him that he must go away, and that his life wasn't safe here; and lots of people are going, Flutters; people who, like father, have sided with King George."

"Where are they going, Miss Hazel?"

"To England, most of them."

"And will the Captain go?"

"No, Josephine thinks not. You see he built this house, Flutters, and he loves it, and he loves this country, too. Josephine says

she believes he'll just stay, and try and live the angry feeling down."

"Miss Hazel," said Flutters, stopping to gather the trailing shawl over one arm, for he was ready now to give his whole mind to the matter in hand, "it's a very puzzling thing 'bout me. When Mr. Harry was telling those sad things of the prison-ship, I thought I was a Whig, and now when you are talking 'bout the Captain, it seems as though I was a—a what do you call it?"

"A Loyalist, Flutters?"

"Yes, a Loyalist; but I reckon folks what has friends on both sides, had better not be anything particular."

"Perhaps that would be best," Hazel replied, smiling in spite of herself.

"Miss Hazel," Flutters said, after a little pause, stopping and looking round him somewhat cautiously, as though he feared his question might be overheard, "did Starlight hear of any 'quiries for me, when he was in the city this afternoon?"

Hazel nodded "Yes" in a most mysterious manner.

"There's no danger of their 'quiring round here, do you think?" and Hazel saw the involuntary little tremble shoot through Flutters's frame.

"No, indeed, Flutters, and we wouldn't give you up if they did. Mrs. Van Wyck told Starlight that a forlorn old man, who belonged to the circus, stopped at her gate and asked if she'd seen anything of a little mulatto boy what had deserted from the troupe, or knowed anything about him, and Mrs. Van Wyck said, 'Lor', no!' never dreaming that her very own little Hans's clothes were on that same little boy that very moment."

"That must have been good old Bobbin," answered Flutters, fairly chuckling over the thought of the entire success of his escape.

"Miss Hazel," he added, after a moment's thoughtful meditation, "I've been thinking how I might earn the money for my clothes by doing a little tumbling for folks round here, only I'm so awfully afraid of being heard of by the circus people."

The suggestion instantly flashed a new scheme through Hazel's mind.

"Flutters," she said, very slowly and seriously, "I've—thought—of—something. Yes, it's the very thing. I'm going to town to-

morrow, to see Colonel Hamilton about an important matter, and I'll make all the 'rangements."

"'Rangements 'bout the clothes, Miss Hazel?"

"Yes, 'rangements 'bout everything; but, hush! 'cause nobody else must know about it." They had reached the porch where Mrs. Boniface was sitting, and Josephine was close behind them, which was the occasion for Hazel's "Hush;" and so little Flutters tumbled into bed half an hour later, still in ignorance as to what the scheme of his "little Mistress" might be, but with perfect confidence in her ability to make any arrangements under the sun.

Joe Ainsworth found his little friend waiting in the sunshine the next morning, and, almost without intimation from him, the leaders came to a standstill, and Hazel mounted to her seat beside him. "Business in town?" ventured Joe.

"Colonel Hamilton's, please," all intent on getting comfortably seated.

"Oh!" exclaimed Joe, with elevated eyebrows, "haven't fixed that matter up yet, eh?"

"Not yet. I haven't had time to see to it until to-day."

"Haven't had time," said Joe, with a significant smile.

"No, I haven't, really. Yesterday I had to go on a sailing party and the day before to the circus."

"My lands, Miss Hazel! I guess if you had to drive this Albany coach every day of your life, week in and week out, and was ever able to take so much as a day off for a circus or a sailing party, you would call that having lots of time. I would, I can tell ye."

"Well, then, perhaps it was because I couldn't do both things, Joe, so I chose the sailing party and the circus."

"I don't blame you, Miss Hazel. Besides, there can't be anything very pleasant for such a loyal little Red-Coat as you to look forward to, in calling on our American Colonel."

"I'm not afraid of any American Colonel," with the air of a grand duchess.

"No, of course not, Miss Hazel, but I'd have a care to that little tongue of yours."

Hazel did not answer. She would not have allowed many

people to offer that unsolicited advice without some sort of a rejoinder, but she had always a most kindly side toward Joe Ainsworth, not entirely accounted for, either, by the fact of the free rides.

For some reason or other the coach horses kept up a good pace that morning, and it was not long before they came to a halt at Hazel's destination.

Colonel Hamilton's law office was in just such another wide-porched double house as the Starlight homestead; and, like it, had been vacated by its rightful owner during the progress of the war, and so had shared the similar fate of being immediately claimed by the English. They were most comfortable-looking dwellings, those old colonial homesteads, cheery and clean without, in their buff coats of paint lined off with generous bands of white, and most hospitable within, with their wide halls running from front to back straight through them. It seemed a shame that such a homelike place should ever be converted into a mere bevy of offices, but, after all, that is but one of many desecrations that follow closely in the train of wretched war. The very sight of the house, and the evident misuse to which it had been put, stirred Hazel's indignation. She did not know who had lived there, but she felt very sorry for them all the same.

It chanced to be her good fortune to find Colonel Alexander Hamilton alone in his office, something that did not often happen in the experience of that great man, and it was also perhaps her good fortune to be altogether unconscious of how truly great he was, else she might not have marched so boldly into his presence and told her story in such a frank and fearless manner. Yet, who knows, there are big and little women the world over, who will stop at nothing, and know neither fear nor shrinking where a friend's interests are concerned, especially such a brave, true friend as Starlight had always proved himself to be.

Colonel Hamilton allowed Hazel to make her statement without interruption, save to ask some lawyer-like question now and then, when, in her childish eagerness, she had failed to put the facts quite clearly; but, notwithstanding her eagerness and the importance of her errand, she took time to note that he was "a lovely-looking gentleman," and to draw a little sigh of regret that so fine a

man should not have been a Tory like herself. When at last she had cleared her mind of all she had to say, she folded her little hands together in her lap, and scanning his handsome face closely, waited for his answer.

But Colonel Hamilton did not answer. With his elbows resting on the arms of his office chair he sat for a few seconds gazing down at his hands, the fingers of which, with thumb pressing thumb, were clasped in meditative fashion before him. Hazel gazed at them too. She thought they were very nice hands, and noticed how fine were the linen frills falling over them from the circle of the tight-fitting, broadcloth sleeve. She was not at all concerned that he did not hasten to reply. She had heard that lawyers gave a great deal of thought to "things," and she would not hurry him. Meanwhile she sought the arms of the chair in which she was sitting as a support for her own elbows, and endeavored to lock her own little hands together in imitation of his—so will the feminine mind occupy itself with veriest trifles even on the verge of most decisive transactions. But the chair-arms were too wide apart and the child-arms too short by far to successfully accomplish the imitation. Colonel Hamilton noted the attempt and smiled. "My little friend," he said at last, "I'm thinking I am the very last man you should have come to about all this. How did you happen to appeal to me?"

"Because, sir (Hazel grew a little embarrassed)—because sir, as I told Joe Ainsworth, who drives the Albany coach, *you* were the gentleman who talked the court into deciding the case against Miss Avery and in favor of Captain Wadsworth."

"And how did you learn that?"

"Oh, I have heard my father talk about it; I am his little daughter Hazel."

"Naturally, but who may your father be?"

"Captain Hugh Boniface, of his Majesty's service," with no little dignity.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Colonel, with surprise, "and what did your father say?"

"He did not think you were right about it, Colonel Hamilton, but he said you were smart enough and handsome enough to make a jury believe anything you wanted to." Hazel did not know why

the Colonel walked over to the window and looked out for a moment, but one might surmise that it was simply to conceal a very broad smile.

"That is rather doubtful praise, Miss Hazel," he said, coming back again, "but I can tell you one thing, I certainly would not try to make a jury believe anything that I did not believe myself."

"No, of course not," Hazel answered warmly, "only I thought you could not have understood about things. That is the reason I have come to ask you to change your mind."

"But, unfortunately, lawyers' minds when once made up cannot be changed very easily, and I am sorry for that, for there is nothing I would rather do than be of service to you and your little friend with the pretty name—what do you call him? Starlight? You see, the bother is, I honestly think the English have a right to dispose of Miss Avery's house, for they did not take it from her nor compel her to leave it. She left it of her own accord, now more than two years ago, and entirely unprotected. Now I do not see why she should expect to come back to it and turn out its present occupant just when she chances to see fit, and the court agrees with me in this."

"But doesn't it seem too bad for a lot of great, strong men to side against a lovely lady like Miss Frances Avery?" and Hazel gave a very deep sigh.

"Yes, in one way it does, Miss Hazel," said Colonel Hamilton kindly, "and the great strong men felt very sorry for her. Unfortunately hers proved to be a sort of test case. There are scores of other people who want to come back and turn people out of the homes where they have been living, some of them for the last six or seven years—indeed ever since New York fell into the hands of the British, and now the court has decided that they ought not to be allowed to come, and that under these circumstances, 'possession is not only nine points of the law,' but ten."

"I do not quite understand what you mean about the points of the law," said Hazel, frankly; "but I do not think about it as you do at all," and, in fact, there were many people in those days, and many, too, in these, who could make Hazel's words their own, never having been able to comprehend how it was that the great lawyer took the stand he did.

"Besides, it is queer," Hazel added, after a moment's cogitation,

"that such a Whig as you are, Colonel Hamilton, should have sided with the Tories."

"Not a whit more queer, it strikes me," laughed the Colonel, "than that a stanch little Loyalist like yourself should be pleading so warmly for the Whigs."

"But if your best friend *was* a Whig and you felt sorry for him?" pleaded Hazel, in extenuation.

"Well to be sure, that does put matters in a different light; but truly, I do not see what you are going to be able to do about it. If Miss Avery can fix matters up with Captain Wadsworth, all well and good, and—"

"No, she can never do that," interrupted Hazel, decidedly. "I have seen Captain Wadsworth myself. He looks like a kind man, but he isn't. He told me to come to you about it; but it seems there's no use going to anybody, and I guess Miss Avery and Starlight will just have to live and die over at Paulus Hook, and never have a home of their own again—never!"

It must be confessed that Hazel's efforts in behalf of the Starlight homestead had apparently met with no success whatever. But she had done what she could, *all* she could, indeed, and there was some comfort in that, at least so she thought, as she walked slowly away from Colonel Hamilton's office. She paused in a meditative way as she reached the gate. "Poor little girl," thought the Colonel, who sat watching her from his office window, "I fancy she had an idea I could go right up to Captain Wadsworth's and turn them all out if I wished to, and half believed I would do it. As it is, I will speak to the Captain. Perhaps he might be able to make some sort of a compromise with Miss Avery."

So after all Hazel had at least succeeded in making a friend of the Colonel, and of Captain Wadsworth, too, for that matter, and it was not altogether improbable that something might result from this state of affairs, though she herself little dreamed it. But Hazel had had a double purpose in coming into the city that morning, and did not stand there at the Colonel's gate because, as the Colonel thought, she was the most sorrowful and hopeless of little suppliants, but because she was trying to decide just what she had better do next.

"Better do next?" was the question that always confronted that restless and active little woman whenever the completion of any one plan left her free to launch upon another. If the little plan had utterly failed, that did not matter. It was her life to be busy about something, though the something might be of no more importance than the making of a doll's dress or the mending of a toy teacup. But now the something to be done was important, and having made up her mind what to do, she suddenly started off at a brisk little pace that would have surprised the sympathetic Colonel could he have seen behind the boxwood hedge that grew close up to the gate on either side. So great indeed was the change in her bearing, he might with reason have suspected her of a little "old soldiering" while in his office.

Hazel's destination was the Starlight homestead, and the man she wanted to see was Sergeant Bellows. She found him seated alone

on a bench under a tree in the front garden, and this suited her exactly, for her interview had need to be a private one. The old Sergeant was cleaning some sword-handles, but was glad enough to have his work interrupted by the unexpected



"DO YOU REMEMBER?"

arrival of his little friend, and made room for her on the bench beside him.

"Do you remember?" Hazel at once began, without waiting to command sufficient breath, "that the last time—I was here—you asked—if there was anything—an old sergeant could do for me?"

"Yes, I remember, Miss Hazel."

"And do you think the other men meant what they said when they asked if there was anything they could do for me?"

"Yes, I'll wager they did."

"Well, now, there is something, Sergeant Bellows, a real important something, and this is it," and straightway Hazel's voice subsided into such a confidential whisper, that even the Sergeant lost a word now and then, but he smiled and nodded assent all the while, to Hazel's great delight.

As for us, it is needless to bother our heads with all she told him, particularly as we shall see what came of it in the very next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

FLUTTERS HAS A BENEFIT.



THE warm and hazy September days were over. The first of October had come in by the calendar, but although its sun had not yet peeped over the horizon, there were unmistakable signs in the east which heralded its coming. As for Hazel, she was up "with the lark," as the saying goes, and with good reason, too, for never did any mere little feathered songstress have as much in hand as had she for that first day of October, and it *all* depended upon the weather.

What wonder, then, with so much on her mind, that the first ray of daylight succeeded in shimmering in beneath the long lashes of her eyes, first setting their lids a-tremble and then prying them open, so that their little owner soon found herself wide-awake, and that the eventful day had dawned. But what sort of a day was it going to be, that was the all-important question. Hazel threw open the shutters of her window. The vine that crept along its sill was dripping wet—could it be raining? She stretched out a

little brown hand that was all of a tremble with excitement, to test if rain were really falling. No, not a drop. It was dew on the vines, of course; how foolish not to have thought of that! But what made the sky so gray? Was it cloudy? Then she tripped over to the clock. Why, so early as that! Then perhaps the sun was not up yet. No, come to look again, of course it wasn't, it was just daylight.

Having reached this conclusion, Hazel, wisely slipping into a flannel wrapper and a pair of bedroom slippers, sat down to wait the rising of that very lazy sun, and soon he came. She watched till he was full above the horizon, then assuring herself that there were no threatening clouds anywhere, crept back into bed, wrapper, slippers, and all, with a mind quite at ease, and in just the sort of a mood for the most refreshing of little morning naps.

One, two, one, two, Company F was marking time preparatory to marching on again, and Sergeant Bellows was in command.

It was two o'clock now, and the sun, for whose dawning Hazel had watched so eagerly, was well on his journey, and shining down on the burnished flint-locks and scarlet coats of Company F, coats which looked bravely in the morning sunlight, notwithstanding many a stain and mark of active service. But not for any skirmishing with their enemies were those English soldiers under marching orders, for never again were they to wage battle with the colonists on American soil. It was now nearly two years since the great battle of Yorktown, when the British soldiers had laid down their arms, and Lord Cornwallis's sword had been surrendered to General Washington, and it would not be long before the whole army, under command of Sir Guy Carleton, would go sailing homeward down the harbor, and not a British roll-call, nor a soldier answering to it, would be heard anywhere in the land. But, somehow or other, notwithstanding all this, Company F, of His Majesty's service, did not look very crestfallen, as they stood there marking time, until a great overhanging load of hay should leave the road clear ahead of them. They had had plenty of time to get used to the thought of not having beaten the Yankees; in fact, some of them went so far as to openly express their honest admiration for the plucky, desperate fashion in which those some poorly-

equipped Yankees had fought, and did not begrudge them their hard-earned victory. Then in seven weeks more they were to turn their faces toward home and England; toward England, which some of them had not seen for eight long years; toward home, where little children had outgrown their childhood, where dear wife faces had grown worn with waiting, and where white-haired mothers, wearied with watching, had perhaps been laid at rest in the little village churchyards. But, come weal or woe, they were soon going home; you could see their faces daily grow brighter with the thought, and happening this morning to have a most novel entertainment in prospect, what wonder that almost every one wore an amused smile, and that every eye twinkled merrily. The clumsy hay-load slowly moved out of the way, and then came the order, "For'ard, march!" from Sergeant Bellows, and off they went, with even swing up Broadway, turning off at the Albany coach road, and then on out into the country. "Halt!" called Sergeant Bellows at last, and Company F halted right in front of Captain Boniface's cottage. It could not have been that they were not expected, for Hazel, with beaming smile, stood holding the gate wide open, and the men filed in and took their seats in chairs which had evidently been placed in rows in the garden for them. The chairs fronted the porch, and were grouped in semicircular shape about the wide steps leading up to it, at the top of which a curtain (for which two blanket shawls had been made to do duty) hung suspended, the cord that held it being fastened to the fluted column at either end. That the shawls were of widely differing plaids, and at great variance in the matter of color, only added to the generally fantastic effect. Without doubt there was going to be some sort of a performance, and it was easy now to guess that Hazel's "'rangements" had been in the line of preparation for it, and easy now to understand why her little ladyship had been up with the lark, to ascertain, if possible, what sort of a day it was going to be. Somehow or other I should not in the least wonder if the "Old Man of the Weather" loves to have a little child place implicit trust in him now and then; surely he does, if he is at all like some of the rest of us whom you little folks call old. At any rate the weather not only favored Hazel's project, but seemed just to give itself up to making everything comfortable for everybody. The sun saw to it that the old house cast a broad square

shadow in front of it that was more than large enough to cover the space where the men were seated, and the wind saw to it that a sufficiently strong little breeze was blowing to temper the early afternoon sunshine, and everything conspired to make it a perfect October day, a sort of good example, as it were, for the thirty other October days that were to follow it.

At last it was time for that mysterious many-colored curtain to be drawn aside, and certain vigorous jerkings of the shawls showed that an attempt was being made in that direction. What did it matter to Company F if it did not work with all the smoothness to be desired, since it finally disclosed to them as fair a little specimen of humanity as the eyes of most of them had ever rested upon. In the centre of the stage, or rather of that portion of the porch which had been divided off for it, sat Hazel's little sister in an old-fashioned high-back chair, her pretty slippered feet reaching but a little way over its edge, and her little dimpled hands folded in her lap in most complacent fashion. She wore a short-waisted, quaint little white dress, barely short enough to show the prettily slippered feet.

Not at all dismayed was little Kate at the sight of so many soldiers seated there in such formal array before her. What was every beautiful Red Coat but another embodiment of her own dear papa; and not in the least alarmed was she by the loud applause which the mere sight of her elicited from admiring Company F. She turned her pretty head on one side and then on the other, her little face wreathed in smiles, and seeming to say in silent baby-fashion, "Thank you, gentlemen." Not that she could not talk. No, indeed, do not think that for a moment; her baby tongue could move with all the insistent chatter of a little English sparrow; but the right time had not come yet. As soon as the applause had somewhat abated, Hazel herself appeared on the scene, arrayed in a jaunty little riding-habit, and with cheeks aglow with excitement, looking prettier, perhaps, than ever before in her life. As was to be expected, her appearance was the cause for renewed applause; but finally all was quiet, and she stepped forward to deliver a little speech which had been carefully thought over. She had insisted upon wearing her riding-habit, because, as she had told her mother, she was to be a sort of showman. Of course she did not want to wear boys' clothes, but the riding-habit seemed sort of a go-be-

tween, "and more like the thing a lady who managed a private circus would wear." So Mrs. Boniface consented, and Josephine, in helping Hazel to dress, had added an extra touch or two. Her habit was made of gray cloth, with a long, full skirt that came within a foot of the ground when Hazel was on her pony; but in order that she should be able to move about the platform as freely as was necessary, Josephine had caught the skirt up on one side, fastening it with two or three brilliant red chrysanthemums, and pinning a bunch of the same bright flowers against her waist. On her head she wore a black velvet jockey cap which had been sent her by her grandpa from England, and which completed the jauntiness of her costume.

"Members of Company F," Hazel began, holding her riding-whip in both hands before her, "I wish to thank you for coming here this afternoon, and to tell you that I hope you will feel repaid for your long march out from the city."

"No doubt about that, Miss Hazel," Sergeant Bellows called out, heartily.

"Thank you, Sergeant;" but Hazel's manner was somewhat stiff, as though she preferred that more formality should be observed. "But before commencing our performance," she continued, "I must ask you to bear in mind that it is not an easy thing to get up a regular circus in a private family, 'specially at such very short notice. There was no time to teach anything new, even to the baby, who learns very easily, and it was just by good luck that Prince and Kate and Delta knew some little tricks already. As for Flutters, it will not take you long to discover that *his* part of the performance needs no apology."

Hazel concluded her little speech with a graceful bow, and, turning toward Kate, who still sat smiling, announced: "I have now the pleasure, gentlemen, of introducing to you Miss Kate Boniface, as fine a little three-year-old as ever was reared in Westchester County. Miss Kate is quite a favorite with the management, being, what we consider, a most gifted little lady. She has an original little dance of her own, one little song, and one little piece, which she speaks with dramatic effect."

"Which s'all I do first, Hazel?" asked Kate, in a most audible whisper, when she saw that it was time for her to commence.



"MEMBERS OF COMPANY F, I WISH TO THANK YOU FOR COMING HERE THIS AFTERNOON."

"Why, the dance of course, child," Hazel answered, forgetting their relations of manager and artiste.

"But where's de music?"

Sure enough, where was the music? "Job," called Hazel, blushing up to the roots of her hair with embarrassment, "we are waiting for you."

"Coming, Mrs. Manager," came the answer, and a moment later Starlight bounded through the green boughs, which had been arranged at the back of the scene, violin in hand, and in a costume befitting the clown of the performance. His resemblance to the real article was truly quite remarkable, for Cousin Harry had taken a great deal of interest in his "make-up," and the result was a face as white, with cheeks as red and eyebrows as high, black, and arching, as were ever attained by Mr. John Dreyfus, the English clown of world-renowned reputation. Starlight was able to play half-a-dozen tunes on an old violin which had belonged to his grandfather, and this formed a most attractive and most important feature of the Boniface circus. Otherwise Company F would have been obliged to forego little Kate's dancing, than which nothing was ever daintier or prettier. But not an inch would her little ladyship move from her chair till Starlight had gone through a series of scrapings called "tuning up," and a merry little dancing tune was well under way. Then she jumped down, and running to the front of the platform made the most bewitching of conventional little bows, pressing the fingers of both hands to her lips, as if generously to throw the sweetest of kisses broadcast. It was very evident, then, to the Red Coats—Miss Hazel to the contrary—that there had been time enough to teach little Kate one new trick at any rate; but the dancing itself was a matter of Kate's own creation, and of a sort that baffles description. She had never seen any one dance, no one had taught her, but as naturally as a little duck takes to the water, had her little feet taken to dancing on that evening when, for the first time, Starlight had brought his violin to the Bonifaces'. For fully ten minutes, to the great delight of Company F, little Kate kept time in a variety of intricate and pretty little motions to the rhythm of the old violin—a sort of dancing in which slow and graceful gestures of dimpled arms and hands played almost as important part as the little feet themselves. In-

deed, the whole proceeding was a deliberate one, owing to an inability on Starlight's part to play any faster; but to my thinking



"THE DANCING WAS A MATTER OF KATE'S OWN CREATION."

all the prettier for that, and far more becoming to such a dignified little maiden.

As for Company F, it would have liked nothing better than a

whole half-hour of dancing ; but "Mrs. Manager" wisely protested, and after the little song had been rendered with "violin accompaniment," and the little piece spoken "with dramatic effect," Miss Kate Boniface tripped from the stage 'midst hearty peals of applause, and Mrs. Manager, as Starlight had called Hazel, came once more to the front.

"I shall now have the pleasure of acquainting you, gentlemen," she said, with all the superiority of a veritable showman, "with my own little thoroughbred, one of the most knowing and accomplished of Shetland ponies. Mr. Lightfoot, will you have the kindness to bring Miss Gladys into the ring?" whereupon Starlight, otherwise Mr. Lightfoot, led the pony on to the stage, or, I should say, "into the ring," as Hazel preferred to regard it from a strictly professional point of view. Gladys had been groomed by Starlight and Flutters to within an inch of her life, in preparation for the occasion, and, indeed, she sorely needed it. The fact was that she had been turned out for the last two months owing to an unfortunate gall on her back which had refused to heal under the saddle ; so, while her mistress had been dependent upon Albany coaches for such excursions as she wished to take into the city, Miss Gladys had been kicking up her heels and running races with herself in the most inviting of clover fields. Only yesterday had she been enjoying all this freedom, with burrs in her tail and burrs in her mane, and with never so much as a halter, and here she was to-day tricked out in blue ribbons, with her coat smoothed down to look as silky as possible, and with her four pretty little hoofs oiled up to a state of shiny blackness, but without the sign of shoe on any one of them. There had been no time, indeed, to have Miss Gladys shod, nor was there any need of it, as, after to-day's performance, back she was to go again, for at least another month more, to all the wild dissipation of pony life in a clover field. Of course she was astonished at the sight of the soldiers, but she had been rehearsing with Starlight and Hazel for a whole hour that morning in that sort of "box stall" which formed the scene of the circus, and so, being somewhat familiar with the place, contented herself with an occasional pricking-up of her black-pointed ears, which only gave her a more spirited look, and, on the whole, was extremely becoming.

"Now, Miss Gladys," said Hazel, when she had succeeded in getting her posed to her liking, "I would like you to answer a few questions, and for each correct answer you shall have a beautiful lump of white sugar. Mr. Lightfoot, have you the sugar ready?"

"Yes, Mrs. Manager," answered Starlight, who, in his capacity of clown, was endeavoring all the while to keep up a funny sort of by-play, and sometimes succeeding; "yes, Mrs. Manager, the sugar is all ready. I have placed, as you perceive, five lumps upon either extended palm, and would like to make this arrangement, that when the pony makes a mistake I may be allowed to eat the sugar."

"Very well, Mr. Lightfoot, I am quite agreeable to the arrangement; but, if I am not mistaken, the pony thinks you are likely to fare rather poorly; how about that, Miss Gladys? Do you intend that Mr. Lightfoot shall enjoy more than one of those lumps of sugar?" Hazel stood leaning against the pony's side, lightly swinging her riding-whip in apparently aimless fashion in her left hand, but in answer to her question, Miss Gladys shook her pretty head from side to side with as decided an assertion in the negative as though she had been able to voice an audible "No." "There! what did I tell you, Mr. Lightfoot?"

"Why! did Miss Gladys answer? I didn't hear her."

"Of course you did not hear her. She answered by shaking her head. Ponies can't talk."

"What! can't Miss Gladys say a word?"

"No, certainly not."

"Not even neigh?"

"That's a *very* bad pun, Mr. Lightfoot. Don't you think so, Miss Gladys?" Up and down went the pony's head in ready assent.

"Two questions answered with remarkable judgment. Now, two lumps of sugar, if you please, Mr. Lightfoot."

Gladys eagerly ate the sugar from Hazel's gloved hand (for sugar was one of the few creature delights a clover field failed to offer, that is, in any form more concrete than the sweetness of a withered clover head), and looked as though perfectly willing to continue the process for an almost indefinite period. Indeed, for a long time Hazel continued to ply her with questions of great moment to Company F, such as, "Is Sergeant Bellows the best

sergeant in his regiment?" "Is 'Company F' the finest company?" and so on, to all of which Miss Gladys gave only the most complimentary of answers. Just when this part of the performance was coming to a close, Mr. Lightfoot stepped up to the pony, and said, in beseeching fashion, "Look here, Miss Gladys, on the whole, you think I'm a pretty good sort of a fellow, now, don't you?" The pony looked at Starlight a moment, and then shook her head, "Yes," in a most decided manner. "That's a darling," Starlight exclaimed, swinging himself on to Gladys's back, in compliance with an order received from Hazel, and with his head resting on her mane and his arms clasped round her prettily-arched neck, rode off the stage. The soldiers, of course, were at first considerably astonished at the pony's intelligent answers, but it did not take most of them long to discover that the shakings of Miss Gladys's head were in every case controlled by a touch of Hazel's whip. A gentle application of the lash on the right foreleg for yes and the same motion on the left one for no. Hazel had tried to conceal this little motion as best she could, but it was naturally not an easy matter, and when Miss Gladys had been kind enough to answer "Yes" to Mr. Lightfoot's question, it was only because Hazel's whip was in Starlight's hand, and the pony felt the same familiar sensation upon her left foreleg.

Perhaps you wonder how it was that a little country pony was so unusually accomplished. Well, to tell the truth, Captain Boniface deserved all the credit of it, and Hazel none at all. When Hazel herself was but a week old that pony had been bought for her, and, as soon as she was able to take notice of anything, Gladys used to be trotted out daily for her inspection. And so it happened that while Captain Boniface was waiting for his little daughter to grow large enough to ride her, he used to amuse himself, and Hazel as well, by endeavoring to teach the pony a few knowing tricks. They had required a world of patience, and with none of them had he been so successful as with what he called the "pony shake," and which just had been exhibited to so much advantage.

"That Miss Hazel's a cute un," said one of the soldiers, in the little intermission that followed the exit of the pony.

"Cute's no name for it," answered Sergeant Bellows.

"She reminds me of my own little girl at home, whom I haven't

seen in a five-year," said the other, while a little mistiness betrayed itself in his soldier eyes.

"She may mind ye of her," answered the Sergeant, not unkindly, "but there isn't a child anywhere, I'm thinking, that can hold a candle to Miss Hazel." You see Sergeant Bellows was an old bachelor, and without a relative in the world whom he cared for, and perhaps that accounted in a measure for his adoration of Hazel, though, no doubt, the little daughter of the red-haired soldier, who was probably red-haired too, was just as charming in the eyes of her father as Hazel in the eyes of the lonely old Sergeant. But further discussion as to comparative merits was brought to an end by the reappearance of Starlight on the stage, accompanied by his dog, Lord Nelson, who, much against his will, had been dragged aboard of the "Gretchen" that morning, and imported from his kennel at Paulus Hook especially for the occasion. Lord Nelson possessed quite a varied set of accomplishments, none of them very remarkable, however, and after Lord Nelson came Flutters! Flutters in velvet and spangles, Flutters of The Great English Circus, and who straightway proceeded to make the eyes of Company F open wide with astonishment at his truly wonderful tumbling and somersaults. There was no slipping of the little knee-cap to-day. It seemed to Flutters quite impossible in the happy life he was leading, that knee-caps or anything else that concerned him should ever get much out of order again.

As may be easily imagined, the audience would not be satisfied till Flutters had favored them with repeated encores, but when the performance was at last concluded, there was a call for the entire troupe, and, in response, out they came, hand-in-hand, Hazel and Kate, Starlight and Flutters; Starlight leading Lord Nelson with the hand that was free, and Flutters Miss Gladys. A low, smiling bow from them all—for even Gladys and Lord Nelson were made to give a compulsory nod—then the line retreated a foot or two, the shawl-curtain dropped into place, and the entertainment was over. At least so thought Company F, but it was mistaken, for no sooner had Hazel and Starlight disappeared behind the curtain, than out they came in front of it, and then down among the soldiers, Starlight carrying a tray full of glasses filled with the most inviting lemonade, and Hazel following with an old-fashioned

silver cake-basket heaped high with delicious sponge cake of Josephine's best manufacture. Then for half-an-hour they had quite a social time of it. Captain and Mrs. Boniface, who had watched the performance from two comfortable chairs at the rear of Company F, were talking with some of the men; Flutters, who, for very good reasons, was still in costume, was the centre of another little group; while Kate, from the safe vantage point of Josephine's lap, chatted away, to the great entertainment of old Sergeant Bellows. Suddenly the Sergeant seemed to recall something important, for he jumped up, seized his hat, and began passing it from one to another of the men, all of whom had, apparently, come prepared for this feature of the entertainment.

Hazel was greatly relieved when she saw the hat in active circulation. She had felt afraid that the Sergeant had forgotten this part of the programme, and did not fancy the idea of having to remind him of it. Indeed he had come pretty near forgetting it, so absorbed had he been in the charms of little Kate, but as a result of the collection taken up by the Sergeant, Hazel found herself in possession of a contribution sufficiently generous to purchase a fine little outfit for Flutters. And so it came about that Flutters had a "benefit" and Company F an afternoon of what they termed "rare good fun."

CHAPTER X.

DARLING OLD AUNT FRANCES.



PERHAPS you think that is a queer title for a chapter. You would not think it queer at all if you had known her, for that is exactly what she was, and now and then it is just as well to call people by their right names. She was not old, however, in the sense of being wrinkled and white-haired and thin. Sometime, when somebody has been very kind to you, and has done you a "good turn" in real reliable fashion, haven't you just rushed up to them

and exclaimed, "You dear old thing," as if any mere young thing would be quite incapable of such a deed of loving-kindness? Well, in just the sense of being very kind and very reliable, Aunt Frances was old, and in no other. To be sure, she was nearing her fiftieth birthday, and there was a generous sprinkling of gray hair on her temples, but the gray hair only made her face softer and sweeter, and her heart was no older than bonny Kate's.

Well, Aunt Frances sat knitting in a high-backed rocker on the wide step in front of the Van Vleet's door, a step that was made from one great unhewn stone, but whose roughnesses had been

rounded down by the rains and storms of a hundred summers and winters. On the edge of the step, with his back against one of the large tubs of hydrangea which flanked the wide door-step on either side, sat Harry Avery. He had been silent for a long while. He was trying to get his courage up to say something to Aunt Frances, something that he knew it would grieve her to hear, and she had had so much to bear lately, he could not easily bring himself to it. "Aunt Frances," he said, at last, "I know you'll be sorry about it, but I think I shall have to go away to-morrow."

"Why, Harry, what do you mean?" while the tears gathered as quickly in her kind eyes as the clouds of an April shower darken an April sky, "and besides, where will you go?"

"Home, I suppose," and then it would have been an easy thing for Harry, grown fellow that he was, to have mustered a few honest tears on his own account.

"You see I am not willing to stay here any longer since you have to pay my board. And then you have so little money coming in now."

"But the Van Vleets only allow me to pay a very small sum, and, Harry, you are such a comfort to me. Starlight's a dear, good boy, but he is not old enough for me to burden him with all my troubles as I do you. Tell me this, do you want to go home?"

"No, I do not want to go home in the least. You know what I mean. I'd give a great deal to see father and mother and the youngsters; but there's nothing for me to do in New London—that is, not the sort of work that I think I am equal to, and, after leaving it the way I did, I hate to go back empty-handed. Then, I'm sure, father would much rather I'd find something to do in New York. He believes there is a good deal more of a chance for a fellow here."

"And you have heard of nothing, Harry; nothing whatever?" Aunt Frances let her knitting fall in her lap, and looked straight at Harry as she spoke. There was something strange about this direct look from Aunt Frances. It seemed to compel the exact truth from everybody, even from Pat, the Van Vleets' hired man, who did not ordinarily hesitate in telling an untruth if it would make things more comfortable. And so Harry did not even succeed in making an evasive reply, as he should like to have done,



"AUNT FRANCES LET HER KNITTING FALL IN HER LAP, AND LOOKED STRAIGHT AT HARRY."

but just answered, very simply and honestly : " Yes, Aunt Frances, I did hear of something—a clerkship in a lawyer's office—but I decided not to take it."

" Decided not to take it? Why, that is the very position you said you would like above all others!"

" Did I say that? well, fellows are queer sometimes, aren't they?"

" Harry Avery, there is something mysterious about all this. What was the name of the lawyer?"

" Oh, no matter, Auntie! The whole matter's decided. I made up my mind not to take it, and that ends it."

Aunt Frances was not to be silenced in this fashion. She had a right to search this matter out, and search it she would. " Harry," as if she were speaking to some little child, " Harry, look me right in the eyes, and tell me, was it Colonel Hamilton?"

" Yes;" but Harry looked off at the river. He had not the sort of courage to look Aunt Frances "right in the eyes," as she bade him, for if there was a man anywhere whom she had a right thoroughly to despise, surely it was Colonel Hamilton—Colonel Hamilton, whose skilful reasoning had deprived her of the home that was almost as dear to her as life itself.

" Is the position still open to you?" Aunt Frances was now gazing off to the river, and with the mark of deep thinking on her face. " If it is, you must take it. Colonel Hamilton is a great lawyer. It is as fine an opening as you could possibly desire. I, for one, have no notion of standing in your light, Harry, and you must not do yourself the injustice of standing in your own."

" But, Aunt Frances—"

" No, don't interrupt me, Harry; only listen, like a good boy, and do just as I tell you. Take the 'Gretchen' first thing in the morning, go straight to Colonel Hamilton's office, and apply for the place. Tell him all about yourself, and answer every question he may ask in the most straightforward manner, but do not volunteer the information that you are a relative of mine. It would not do you any good and it might do harm—that is, it might incline the Colonel less kindly toward you. Unless some one has gotten ahead of you, you will secure the place, I am sure of it, and no one will be more glad for you than just my very self."

"Aunt Frances," said Harry, watching the needles that were again flashing in the afternoon sunlight, "you are the dearest old trump that ever knitted stockings for a fool of a fellow like me."

"If I thought this stocking was really to grace a fool's leg"—and Aunt Frances feigned great seriousness—"not another stitch would I take; but, begging your pardon, you would have been a fool indeed if you had not told me about all this, although I perfectly understand that your motives for not telling me were anything but foolish. No, Harry; somehow I am sure it is only providential that you should have heard of this place. Promise to try for it."

"I promise," and Harry's lightened heart unconsciously betrayed itself in voice and look. He had wanted the situation, oh! so much, more than he would admit even to himself, but he had decided he must forego any attempt to secure it. It would be, he thought, at too great a cost to Aunt Frances's feelings, and he simply must not ask it.

"Look, Harry," she said, shading her eyes with one hand, "isn't that the Boniface boat about a mile to the left of the point?"

"Yes, it is," Harry answered, merely glancing in that direction; "but tell me one thing before I go down to the wharf: tell me, Aunt Frances, *do* you think Colonel Hamilton an unprincipled man?"

"Unprincipled! Why, Harry, do you suppose for a single moment that I would urge you to seek a situation under him if I thought that? No, I believe that he honestly felt that the English ought to be allowed to keep possession of the houses that we had abandoned, and so perhaps it was only natural that when Captain Wadsworth took his case to him, he should bring all his eloquence, which is very great, to bear on that side of the question. Nevertheless I confess, as that eloquence cost me my home, I cannot but feel pretty sore about it, and would go a long way out of my way to avoid meeting him, brave officer and brilliant lawyer as he is."

Harry felt considerably relieved by this assertion, and strolled down to the boat-landing with even more admiration for "darling old Aunt Frances" than he had ever felt before. It was so unusual, he thought, to find a woman who could reason fairly, independent of her heart.

But Aunt Frances was not quite so 'independent of her heart,'

as Harry put it, as Harry and the rest of the world thought, and for the very good reason that her heart was as big as herself. And so when Harry had left her, what did she do but lay aside her knitting, go straight up to her own little room in one of the gable ends of the house, shut the door of it, and then, sitting down in a low little rocking-chair, bury her face in her hands and cry. It had not been by any means an easy thing for her to urge Harry to seek a position under a man who had wrought her so much harm, but it had been her plain duty, at whatever cost to herself, and she had done it. Now when Aunt Frances cried, it was because that great heart of hers had had one little ache crowded upon another little ache till it could bear no more, and then the hot tears *must* (there was no choice at all in the matter) be allowed to flow for a while and ease it. But for all this, do not think for a moment that Aunt Frances was an unhappy sort of person. Each little experience of her life and of the lives of others had a very deep significance for her, because she believed with all her heart that God watches over every life and guides it, and no one who believes that can ever be unhappy long at a time; life is to them too beautiful and earnest. But this was the way of it with Aunt Frances: she had a great capacity for loving, if you understand what that means, but she did not have as much of a chance to spend that love as many another, who had not half as much to spend. She would always be Miss Frances Avery, she felt sure of that; yet what a tender, loving wife she could have made for somebody! She should never have any one nearer to her than Harry and Starlight (bless their hearts!) but oh, what a mother she might have been with her great passionate love for little children! And so it was that Aunt Frances trod the round of the life God had sent her, because He had sent it, contentedly and happily, and yet it would happen now and then that some thoughtless word or deed would almost unaccountably set one little spot to aching, and something else would set another, till her heart was all one great ache, and the pent-up tears must come. Aunt Frances could always tell perfectly well when there was need to retreat to the little room in the gable, the little room that had been hers now, for the two years since she had fled from her own home across the river; and while she sat there on the step with Harry she knew well enough what she should do the moment he was gone. It was not

that she did not mean every word she said to him; it was only that somehow that little talk had overcharged the brave heart.

Afterward, when the Bonifaces' boat had touched at the dock and all the Van Vleets were flocking out of doors to welcome them, Aunt Frances was in their midst, with the sunshine of her presence all the brighter for the storm of troubled feelings that had just swept over it, but Josephine Boniface thought she saw just the faintest trace of recent tears in Aunt Frances's eyes as she stooped to kiss her. "Dear old Aunt Frances," she whispered, as she put her arm about her neck, "I would give all the world ever to be such a blessed ministering angel as you are to everybody."

"Why, Josephine, darling, what foolishness," whispered Aunt Frances; but it needed only those few sweet words to banish even the trace of tears, and to make her thoroughly light-hearted once again.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VAN VLEETS GIVE A TEA-PARTY.



THE Van Vleet family was composed of seven individuals. There were Father and Mother Van Vleet, who had been married while both were in their teens, and their five children, Gretchen, Heide, Francesca, Pauline, and Hans Van Vleet, who had been born in the order named in the seven years immediately succeeding their parents' marriage. So, in point of fact, now that they were grown, there was scarcely any perceptible difference between this comfortable Dutch couple and their children, save that the children were taller, which made it seem more of

a joke that they should actually belong to a father and mother who looked almost as young themselves. All this combined to make them a united and congenial family, and they lived in a comfortable old Dutch homestead and were very well-to-do, owing to the well-tilled acres that stretched down to the river in front of them and back to the ridge of the Jersey Flats behind. But there was one minor chord in the otherwise cheery harmony of the Van Vleet household. Pauline, the youngest sister, now about twenty-two, was not "quite bright," but she was serene and, as

a rule, perfectly happy, which is a deal more than can be said of many people, be they ever so bright. There were two reasons for this serenity of Pauline's : her own naturally placid temperament and the tender care with which all the others watched over her. But one thing must be confessed, they were not a patriotic family, and the blood in their veins coursed somewhat sluggishly. They had rather hoped that the colonists would win in the war of the Revolution, thinking, no doubt, it would be more to their interest, yet it had never once occurred to Hans or his father to shoulder a flintlock in place of a hoe and go and help them. They were a good, narrow, stay-at-home family, with their thoughts moving in one and the same channel, and with interests bounded by their own acres, their own experiences, and those of their nearest neighbors.

But there was one delightful feature about their neutrality : they could be the best of friends alike with Whigs and Royalists, and were able to invite the Bonifaces to a tea party just as cordially as they could offer the shelter of their home to poor fugitive Aunt Frances. And a few days before they had invited them. Kind old Mrs. Van Vleet, knowing that these were very lonely days at best for Captain Boniface's family, determined to do all that lay in her power to brighten them, and so a formal invitation, written by Heide in the stiffest of little cramped hands, was sent them. Mrs. Boniface had accepted most gladly. It meant so much to have this evidence of true friendship at a time when many old friends were looking askance and turning a cold shoulder.

And now Saturday afternoon had come, the first Saturday in October, and the Boniface boat was tacking across the river in the teeth of a bracing west wind. They were all there, the entire household, from Captain Boniface, at the helm, to Flutters, in his well-fitting corduroys, seated astride of the bow. Flutters loved to be in the "front of things" generally, but in the present instance it frequently became necessary for him to draw his knees quickly up to his chin, being quite too newly shod to run the risk of contact with the salt water white caps that now and then thumped plumply against the bow. Harry Avery was at the wharf long before the little boat touched it, and stood

whittling a brier-wood stick as he waited, and dreaming the while the happiest dreams about the future that might open up before him if he should secure that position with Colonel Hamilton. Somehow or other Harry felt almost certain he could get ahead in the world if it would only give him any sort of a chance.

"Halloo there, Harry ! a penny for your thoughts," called Captain Boniface, bringing his boat about and alongside of the wharf in true sailor fashion.

Harry jumped to his feet and blushed like a school-girl, as if he half feared the thought of his heart could be read by them all. "It is fortunate that I am not bound to tell them," he answered, catching the rope which the Captain had thrown him, and securing it to a staple.

"No, not bound, of course, but thoughts ought to be of a pretty high order that make you unmindful of the coming of the 'Grayling' and the Bonifaces."

Harry was glad to find the Captain in this lighter vein, for life had been too serious and complicated a matter lately for him often to forget its seriousness. As for Mrs. Boniface, she had been both surprised and delighted when she found her husband willing to accept the Van Vleets' invitation, for lately it had been quite impossible to get him to take any interest in anything of the sort, and she feared a kind but absolute refusal. But no sooner had the "Grayling" cleared her dock than the Captain seemed to regain his wonted good spirits, and to leave all his heavy-heartedness behind, and glad indeed was his little family to see him in a cheery mood once more.

As soon as the Bonifaces commenced to ascend the beautiful grass-grown meadow, which swept down to the water's edge, out came all the Van Vleets to meet them and escort them up to the house ; and it was a remarkable old dwelling, unlike anything one would see nowadays, if it were not that two or three such homesteads have chanced to survive the ravages of a century, by grace of having once been dignified as "Washington's Headquarters."

It was a double two-story house, or rather three-story, if you count the little rooms in the gables. It was built of stone, coated with a rough sort of plaster, and faced the river ; its large square stoop, flanked with its two benches, being

protected by the overhanging eaves of the roof itself. The front door, seldom opened, was ornamented with a huge brass knocker in the shape of a lion's head, and was daily burnished with as much thoroughness as though in constant use. Indeed, it must



THE VAN VLEET HOMESTEAD.

he confessed that in front everything was severe and prim and painfully stiff, but fortunately at the side things were different. Indeed, the house, in its two entirely different aspects, resembled an old army officer, always stern and arbitrary with his men for the sake

of discipline, but 'another fellow altogether' when off duty and in the company of his brother officers. At the side it was as though you surprised it in undress uniform. In the first place, there was always, in the season, a great profusion of flowers; not, however, in conventional flower beds, but parading their blaze of color from painted tubs, mounted here and there on the table-like tops of old tree stumps, which had evidently survived the first clearing of the land. Fortunately for general effectiveness, these tubs were not filled with a promiscuous assortment of plants, but each held the luxurious growth of some single variety—here a hydrangea, with its wealth of heavy-headed blooms, fairly concealing its leaves; there a great cluster of peonies or brilliant scarlet geraniums. As might be expected on the first Saturday of October, many of these plants bore only a few tardy blossoms, and some of them had evidently lost all heart with the first intimation of frost; but in the centre of the old-fashioned grass plot was a contrivance that from June well into November presented a remarkable blaze of color, varying with every month, and always beautiful. This contrivance, called by the Van Vleets "The flower fountain," was composed of a series of five circular shelves, each shelf a little smaller in circumference than the one below it, and terminating, at the height of about five feet from the ground, in a round flat top. These shelves were constantly crowded with pots of plants in full bloom. Indeed, Hans kept a sort of nursery for no other reason than to supply the fountain, and the moment a plant took it into its head to bloom no longer, or only in a spiritless way, back it was marched to the nursery, and another took its place. What a fine thing it would be if some of the little folk too, who are not blooming out into just the sort of grown folk we could wish, might simply be remanded to the nursery, there to be restarted, after the manner of Hans's plants, and perhaps coaxed into a more satisfying growth than they now, alas! give promise of! But if it had not been for this flower fountain, who knows but Hans might have gone to the war? You can see how it would not be an easy thing for a placid, kind-hearted Dutchman, who loved the training and slipping and potting of plants above everything else in the world, to turn his pruning-knife into a sword.

On the afternoon of the tea-party this fountain was ablaze with chrysanthemums, varying in color from the darkest red to the palest

pink, and from orange to pure white. The plants of one shelf hid the pots of the shelf above it, and the lowest shelf of all was sunk so low in the ground as to be concealed by the grass. But what gave this side of the house the "homiest" look of all was the row of shining milk tins ranged in a row on a low bench, and tilted against the wall. Then, just beyond them, the kitchen door opened, and such a kitchen! with tables and dresser and every wooden thing in it scoured to immaculate whiteness, and with white sand daily sifted upon the floor in most remarkable patterns. In this kitchen the Van Vleets not only ate, but lived, and so it possessed that undefinable charm which sometimes belongs to the living-room of a family, and never to any other. In preparation for the Bonifaces' coming, large, high-backed Dutch rockers had been ranged round this kitchen door, and here the little party seated themselves under the uncertain shade of a half-leafless oak-tree, that allowed the warm sunshine to slant gratefully down upon them, and where they could enjoy the flower fountain to the full. The Misses Van Vleet were busy within doors attending to the preparations for supper—that is, with the exception of Pauline, who was always at liberty to do pretty much as she chose; and what she had chosen to do this afternoon was this: After the Bonifaces had come up from their boat she had noticed somebody still moving about in it, so down she went to investigate. Then, when she reached a point near enough to be quite satisfactory to her ladyship, she sat herself down on the low, straight limb of a stunted apple-tree, and waited.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERRUPTION.



HE somebody moving about in the "Grayling" was Flutters. He was arranging boat cushions, folding up wraps and shawls, and putting things generally to rights. Dear little fellow! No one had told him he ought to do this; he did it quite by grace of his own thoughtful intuition, and he found so many little things all the while to do, and did them all so gladly, that he wondered a trifle proudly how the Bonifaces had ever managed without him, and the Bonifaces wondered too.

Finally, when Flutters had gotten everything into literally ship-shape condition, and quite to his mind, off he started up

the bank, bending far over, as one must when one attempts to scale a steep place rapidly. So it chanced that he did not see Miss Pauline at all until she spoke to him, and he was himself directly under the scant shadow of the apple-tree.

"Not so fast, sir," said Pauline, in an authoritative way, which brought Flutters, surprised and breathless, to a standstill.

"Sit down," she added in a moment, pointing to a rock covered with gray moss, and confronting the limb where she was sitting.

Flutters mechanically obeyed. He knew she must be one of the family, and as he had met many queer people in his day, did not marvel that here was somebody, to all appearances, a little queerer than the rest. She looked very pretty balanced there on the low limb of the tree, in her full-skirted gray gown, and with the western sunlight shining on her back and turning her curling yellow hair into a sort of halo about her forehead. Flutters sat and stared at her.

"Do you like my looks?" she asked complacently.

"Yes," replied Flutters, astonished; "you are a Miss Van Vleet, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm Miss Pauline Van Vleet."

"I thought so," Flutters remarked, just by way of saying something.

"It is best *never* to say what you think," said Miss Pauline solemnly. "Folks get themselves into trouble that way."

Flutters felt inclined to suggest that people would be very stupid and uninteresting if they did not sometimes say what they thought, but wisely concluded it was better not to start an argument with this peculiar young person.

"Are you a new Boniface?" asked Pauline, scanning him closely.

"No, not exactly," laughed Flutters.

"I did not ask what you were exactly; are you a new Boniface at all?"

What a queer question, thought Flutters, and then went to work to answer it to the best of his ability.

"No, I am not a Boniface at all, but I am new in this part of the country. I used to live in England."

"What is your name?"

"Flutters."

Miss Pauline seemed very much amused at this, saying it over to herself two or three times. "Did your father use to call you Flutters?" she asked presently, looking at him searchingly.

"No," he answered, the color rushing into his brown face, for no one had asked him that direct question before.



“MISS PAULINE BURIED HER FACE IN HER TWO PRETTY HANDS, AND BEGAN TO CRY.”

"What did he call you?"

"He called me—he called me—but that is one of the things I do not tell to anybody."

"But, Flutters, child, you will tell me, just me," and Pauline looked at him with a look as pathetic as though she were pleading for her life.

"But I can't, Miss Pauline, really I can't;" whereupon Miss Pauline buried her face in her two pretty hands, and began to cry like a child.

"Why, you're not crying for that, surely?" Flutters asked, never more astonished in his life.

"Yes, just for that—just for that—and I'll cry harder and harder until you tell."

The truth was, all the Van Vleets were so in the habit of humoring this poor sister of theirs, and never crossing her will if it could possibly be helped, that this refusal on Flutters's part truly seemed to her most preposterous, and she was shedding actual tears. Flutters saw one or two of them find their way through her fingers, and, like other heroes, relented at the sight; besides, what else was to be done?

"I will tell you, I will tell you," he said softly; "my real name is Arthur Wainwright;" and the mere sound of it, whispered though it was, made him start. It was so long now since he had heard it on the lips of any one! Indeed, it did not seem as though it belonged to him at all.

"That's a pretty name," replied Pauline, beginning to be comforted and to dry her tears; "now tell me *all* about you."

"Oh, I can't," replied Flutters, pained at the need of refusing; "I *must* keep it a secret."

"You can keep it a secret all the same," said Pauline sadly, and with that insight into her own deficiencies which sometimes flashes across a distraught mind, "for, you see, I cannot remember it long enough to tell it to anybody, so tell me, please—please tell me; nothing makes Pauline so happy as a real true story."

The entreaty in her voice was too much for Flutters, and he dreaded more than he could express a fresh outburst of tears, therefore he decided to run the risk, and try if he could to make Miss Pauline happy, especially as he thought it highly probable that what

she said was true, and that she really would not remember anything long enough to repeat it.

"There is not much about me," he began, "but I will tell you all there is." It did not occur to his honest little soul that any story he might have chosen to concoct would have answered just as well for Miss Pauline. He neither added to nor in any way digressed from the exact truth.

"My father was an Englishman," he continued, "and he lived for a while in India, for he had some business there, and my mother was a colored woman."

"Oh, dear me!" said Pauline, "I would not like a father of one sort and a mother of another; which kind did you like best?"

"I do not remember my mother at all, but my father said she was beautiful and a good woman, but not just what people call a lady. She died when I was two years old, and then my father took me to England, and then after a while he married a real lady, a white English lady like himself, and they had some lovely white children; but the English mother never liked me. I think she couldn't somehow, Miss Pauline"—he seemed to reason as though he were afraid of blaming anybody—"and I thought I was in the way—in the way even of my father; and so one day I ran off and joined a circus that was coming to America. But I did not care for the circus very much, and so Job Starlight and Miss Hazel helped me to run away from that, and now I'm Miss Hazel's body servant, and the Bonifaces seem to like me, and I never was so happy in all my life before."

"That's a very nice story, too nice for a secret. Why don't you tell it 'round?"

"Oh, because I don't want my father ever to hear of me, for then he might send for me, and I want to stay with the Bonifaces always. You won't tell, will you, Miss Pauline?"

"I would if I could," she answered, with a spirit of mischief, "but you can't tell things if your head's like a sieve, and lets everything through, can you? Now is there nothing more?"

"No, there isn't," Flutters answered, a little shortly, indignant at her answer. It hardly paid, he thought, to be kind to a young lady who acted like that. But fortunately Pauline did not notice the curtness of his reply.

"Then give me your hand, Flutters, and we'll go up to the house."

"No, I thank you. Boys as big as I am don't need to be helped along by the hand."

"Flutters," she said solemnly, "give—me—your—hand or I'll—I'll cry harder than before."

"Oh dear, dear, dear," thought Flutters, "is there no way out of this?" and he looked furtively down the bank toward the boat, as though he seriously contemplated taking to his heels and launching out upon the river as the only adequate means of escape. But suddenly Miss Pauline put one hand to her ear, and Flutters, looking in the direction in which she pointed with the other, saw that some one up at the house was ringing a bell, and at the same time too heard its tinkling, which Pauline's keen hearing had been quick to detect.

"Flutters," she said, gazing down at him with the most satisfied smile imaginable, "that means supper. Come on up;" then away she flew toward the house, leaving Flutters to follow at a reasonable gait, and profoundly thankful to be relieved from the alternative of either being led by the hand or taking refuge in ignominious flight.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORE ABOUT THE TEA-PARTY.



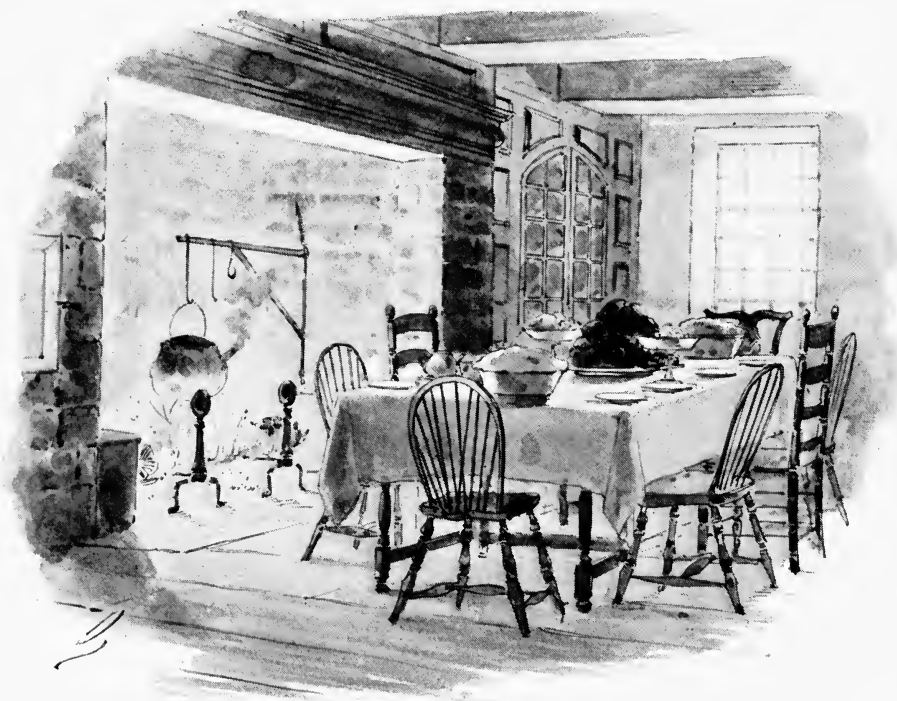
O one had noticed the *tête-à-tête* which Flutters and Miss Pauline had been holding at a distance, only when Flutters came on the scene Hazel asked what had kept him so long, and he made some evasive reply. He hoped no one would ever know of the encounter. In the first place, because he foolishly felt he had somehow been gotten the best of, and, in the second place, because Miss Pauline had heard what he had fully intended no one of his new friends ever should hear.

As a member of the Van Vleet household, Starlight naturally felt a share in the responsibility of entertaining, and, taking Flutters under his wing, presented him to one and another of the family as "Flutters, the new boy over at the Bonifaces'."

"No such thing," said Miss Pauline when in turn Flutters was introduced to her; "he's not a new Boniface at all; I know better than that, don't I, dear?"

"Oh, what shall, what shall I say?" groaned Flutters inwardly; but Starlight dragged him away with the explanation that the young lady was not right in her mind, and so there was no necessity of saying anything.

It proved a most inviting table that the Van Vleets had spread for their Royalist friends. Two deep apple pies graced either end of it; a great platter of doughnuts or "oly keoks," as the Dutch has it, had been placed in the centre, towered above, on one side, by a long-stemmed glass dish of preserved peaches, and, on the other side,



GOOD CHEER AT THE VAN VLEETS

by a similar dish of preserved pears. Frau Van Vleet presided over a large Delft teapot ornamented, as Washington Irving describes a similar pot, "with paintings of fat little Dutch shepherds and shepherdesses, tending pigs, with boats sailing in the air and houses built in the clouds, and sundry other ingenious Dutch fantasies." As the kitchen table was not of the extension variety, and so not

capable of accommodating the entire party, places had to be set for Hans, Harry Avery, and two of the Van Vleet sisters at a separate table in one corner.

At the back of Frau Van Vleet's customary seat at the larger table was the great open fireplace, which was roomy enough to accommodate two people on each of the benches lining either side of it. On a crane, suspended over the crackling logs, hung a huge copper tea-kettle, from which Harry, since he had been staying with the Van Vleets, had taken upon himself the duty of refilling the Delft teapot whenever needed during the progress of a meal, and indeed had completely won the heart of the kind old Frau, as soon as he had come among them, by his eagerness to serve her in every possible way. To-night he was kept busy, for both Van Vleets and Bonifaces were famous tea-drinkers, only they managed the matter differently in those days. The lump of sugar was placed beside the cup, not in it, and people nibbled and sipped alternately. The principal hot dish of the tea-party was broiled ham, and, done to a turn and deliciously savory, was delicate enough to tempt almost any appetite. Then there were two blue china plates heaped with biscuits, every one of which, from very lightness, had risen and risen, till top and bottom were a long way apart; but notwithstanding these generous proportions, the two blue plates had been emptied and replenished more than once before all were satisfied.

Miss Pauline's seat at the table had been placed at quite a distance from Flutters, but, without daring often to look in her direction, Flutters felt with considerable nervousness that her gaze was riveted almost constantly upon him. Finally, to his astonishment, and at a time when there had been a pause of several seconds, she announced very calmly, "Wainwright's a nice little boy. I like his looks and he likes mine; don't you, Wainwright?"

Flutters kept his eyes on his plate, and in his embarrassment swallowed two or three morsels of ham that were far too large in far too rapid succession. "She'll tell it all, if they only give her time," he thought savagely, but he did not intend to make any reply.

"She means you, Flutters," whispered Miss Heide, who sat next to him. "You had better answer her, 'that you do like her looks.' We never differ with her. It is just a fancy of hers, this calling you Wainwright; but where could she ever have heard the name?"

"If it only were a fancy," thought Flutters, while Miss Pauline sat, with her teacup poised in her pretty hand, waiting his reply.

"Yes, I like your looks," said Flutters in a compulsory sort of way that made every one smile, while the color surged over his brown face.

"That's right," she answered complacently, "and I wouldn't mind at all about your mother being colored, because that's how you come by your dark skin, and your dark skin is the beauty of you."

Miss Pauline was growing rather personal, and it certainly did look as though she knew what she was talking about; but fortunately no one attached any weight to what she said, and as she seemed inclined to follow up a line of thought which must at least be annoying to poor little Flutters, the sister who sat nearest her tried quietly to divert her, while another started a new topic of general conversation.

At last the meal was over, and Flutters was glad; nor was he the only one that felt relieved. Captain Boniface had finished his supper sometime before the others, and for the last ten minutes had been nervously taking up his tumbler and setting it down, and shifting his position in his chair, as though unable longer to keep his long legs penned under the narrow table. Mrs. Boniface had noticed it and wondered at it, and felt thankful when Frau Van Vleet pushed back her chair and so gave the signal to the others.

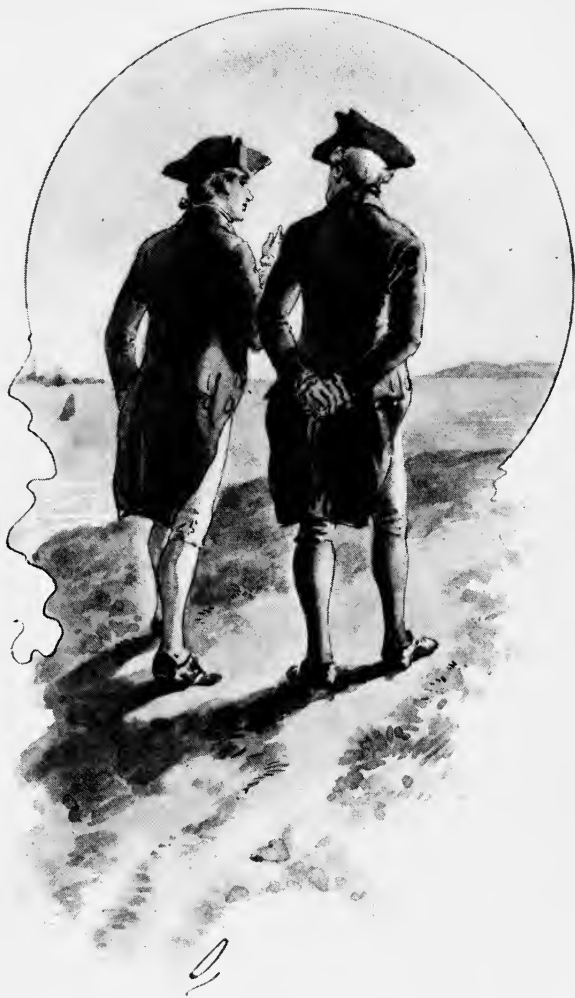
"Oh, dear, what can the matter be?" screeched a great green parrot hanging in its cage by the doorway, and who had apparently been roused from deep reverie by the scraping of the chairs on the sanded floor. Mrs. Boniface gave a start of surprise, for the parrot had given exact expression to her own thoughts. She was watching her husband closely, and knew by experience that something was troubling him, and yet he had been so gay that very afternoon. "I believe it was all assumed," she thought to herself, and the more she thought, the more assured she felt that she was right. Oh, how she longed to steal over to him and question him; but no, that would not do. Frau Van Vleet had arranged two chairs side by side for a neighborly chat, and there was no way out of it.

Now that the supper was over, the Misses Van Vleet's domestic duties were over too, the clearing of the table being left to

"Rhuna," an old crone of a negro servant, who had been with them many years. Then, as was their wont, the young ladies resorted each to her particular rush-bottomed chair and the knitting of her own woollen stockings, while Josephine, with little Kate upon her lap, endeavored to make her exhibit some of her pretty accomplishments for their general amusement. Hazel, Starlight, and Flutters had accompanied Hans Van Vleet and his father off to the barn for the milking, while Captain Boniface and Harry, in close conversation, walked off toward the river. Harry had joined the Captain at a signal that he would like to speak to him, but he had not noticed his altered manner, and under the impression that he was in the best of spirits, was altogether unprepared for what he was about to hear.

"Harry," began the Captain seriously, "I have received the most distressing news within the last twenty-four hours."

"You don't mean it, sir," with evident surprise; "I thought matters were looking brighter for you every day. I have reason to



" 'HARRY,' BEGAN THE CAPTAIN SERIOUSLY."

know that at least two of the signers of that insulting note you received are heartily ashamed of their behavior, and are actually on the look-out to atone for it in some fashion."

"So I hear, and I am very grateful; but all that good news is offset by other news which has reached me this morning: some Tory friends of ours in South Carolina have just been brutally murdered by the Whigs," and then the Captain excitedly narrated all the sad details of the tragedy so far as he knew them.

Harry listened attentively. "It is certainly very dreadful," he said at last sadly; "but," he added with characteristic honesty, "I have heard of some of the doings of those South Carolina Tories, and many of them, though possibly your friends were not among them, deserved harsh treatment, Captain Boniface."

"Harry," said the Captain abruptly, as though too busy with his own thoughts to have heard what was said, "tell me frankly, do you suppose this community will ever again treat me as a decent member of society?"

"Yes, Captain Boniface, I do, and I have something with me this moment that points that way," and he handed him an unsealed envelope. It was addressed to the Captain, and he found it to contain a card of invitation, which read as follows: "The Executive Committee of the Assembly respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of New York that a dance will be given on Monday next at the City Assembly Rooms, to begin precisely at five o'clock. Price of tickets, six shillings."

"So they ask us to the Assembly, do they?" said the Captain, glancing over it with evident surprise. "They have contrived to leave us very little heart for dancing," he added sadly.

"But you will go," urged Harry; "that invitation means even more than you suspect. It means, I think, that there is an organized effort on foot to fully reinstate you, and some other Tories as well, whom they have treated so uncivilly."

"So you think it implies all that?" said the Captain, smiling incredulously at his enthusiasm.

"Yes, I'm sure it does, and you will go and take Mrs. Boniface and Miss Josephine; promise me, Captain."

The Captain did not reply at once, and Harry had time to realize that in his earnestness he was rather overstepping bounds.

"Of course I do not mean to ask you to promise me," he stammered, coloring up to the roots of his hair, "but you know what I mean. I am so anxious you should meet them half way."

"And you think we really ought to go? Why, a Dancing Assembly is the last thing in the world we care to have a hand in. But Mrs. Boniface will not stir a step when she hears about this wholesale murder of the Bentons, so that settles it."

"And you feel that you *must* tell her?"

"No, of course there is no must about it. I will think it over," and then the Captain and Harry entered into a thorough discussion of the events that had led up to the sad consummation in South Carolina, and Harry had some facts at his command by which he succeeded in partially convincing the Captain that, in many cases, the Tories had been treated very much as they deserved.

"Well, Harry, you may be right, you may be right," sighed the Captain, "but that does not make the sacrifice of my old friends any easier to bear."

"Not a whit, sir, I can understand that," and then they started toward the house, for they could see that Mrs. Boniface and Frau Van Vleet were taking formal leave of each other.

Twilight was settling down upon the river, and in those days, when it was the custom for fashionable dancing parties to begin at five o'clock, it was surely fitting that the same hour should conclude an unfashionable Dutch tea-party. Indeed, by the time darkness had fairly mastered the twilight, all the Van Vleets were snugly in bed, and only one light could be seen in the whole farm-house; that was in the window of Aunt Frances's gable room. There she sat reading, by the light of a plump little Dutch candle, certain familiar passages from some dearly loved books. She knew most of them by heart, and yet to much pondering of the noble, uplifting thoughts of these comforting little books was due much of that cheerful courage which was such a help to everybody.

Meanwhile the "Grayling" sailed "up river" and "cross river," and reached her dock. She had one more name on her list of cabin passengers, however, than when she had sailed that morning, for how could Aunt Frances say "No" when Hazel had come to her and begged that she would please be so very good as to let them have Starlight for over Sunday?

CHAPTER XIV.

HAZEL HAS A CONVICTION.



"STARLIGHT," said Hazel, seriously, next morning, as they sat side by side on the porch, "I've been thinking."

"Yes," said Starlight, dryly; "most people do."

"I've been thinking, Starlight," Hazel continued, "that perhaps I am not doing quite right by Flutters."

"You're doing mighty kind by him, I'm sure, and he thinks so, too. You've given him a home and clothes and plenty to eat, and all he has to do is to wait on your ladyship and take charge of the pony. I shouldn't call that work, nor Flutters doesn't, either. He says it is all just fun, and if there's a finer family anywhere than the Bonifaces he'd like to

see 'em, only he knows he never shall see 'em, because there isn't such a family."

"Are you making that up, Job Starlight?"

"Well, I guess not. Flutters says something of that sort every time we're left alone together. It seems as though his heart was so overflowing that he just had to ease it whenever he got a chance."

"Well, it's certainly very pleasant to have him feel like that."

"Why, he just worships the ground—"

Starlight paused to shy a stone at a guinea hen that was encroaching on one of the flower beds—"your *mother* treads on."

Starlight knew well enough that he ended this sentence quite differently from what Hazel had expected; but Hazel was wise enough not to show her surprise, and besides, if there was any worshipping to be done, she was about as glad to have Flutters worship the ground her mother trod on as that over which her little feet had travelled.

"No, but I've been thinking," she said, resuming her own line of thought, "that, for all we know, Flutters may be a regular little heathen, for I have an idea that the mulattoes are a very savage tribe. Did you ever hear him say a word about religion, or what he believed, and things like that?"

Starlight scratched his head, by way of helping his memory. "Never a word, come to think of it."

"Well, now, Starlight, that is very strange, and I believe I'll take him to church this very morning, and see how he acts."

"Yes, let's," said Starlight, taking most kindly to the project. "If he's never been in one, it will be awful fun to see how he takes it."

"People don't go to church to have awful fun. If that's what you're going for, you had better stay home."

Starlight clapped his hand over his mouth, as though to suppress a most explosive giggle. "My gracious, Hazel! What has come over you?"

"Nothing has come over me, and you know it. I always love to go to church, and I love everything they do there; and I think it's beautiful where they sing, 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' after the commandments, and everybody keeps their head bowed."

Starlight did not answer. It was evident Hazel was launching upon one of what he called her "high-minded moods;" and, indeed, child though she was, Hazel did have times when she thought very deeply—times when the soul that was in her seemed to reach out after things eternal. It was not at all an unusual experience. It does not always need even ten round years to bring a child to a point of knowing for itself that there is a longing that this world, all

wonderful and beautiful though it be, does not fully satisfy. Such a knowing does not make a child less a child, or rob it of an iota of its joyousness, only sometimes lends a sweet and earnest depth to the little God-given life. But to matter-of-fact Job Starlight, it must be confessed that such a mood was not at all satisfactory. He did not comprehend it, and standing in awe of Hazel's "high mindedness," always endeavored to bring her down to his own level as quickly as possible by means of some diverting subject. This time he fortunately spied it in the shape of two prim little maidens, Prayer-Book in hand, who came demurely walking, side by side, down the path that skirted the roadway.

"Why, there come the Marberrys," he remarked.

"Sure enough," said Hazel, flying to the gate. "Are you going to church?" she called over it.

"Yes," answered the little Marberrys simultaneously; indeed, they were a pair of simultaneous children. In the first place, they were twins; in the second place, they were as alike in appearance as peas in a pod, and, in the third place, one little brain seemed to be the perfect fac-simile of the other. It was no uncommon thing for them to utter the same thought, in the same words, at the same time; and when this did not happen, one would generally echo what the other had said. They had been christened Mathilde and Clothilde; but Milly and Tilly had been the outcome of that, and of course the similarity in the sound of the two names led to much confusion, since the initial letter was all that distinguished them.

Hazel had come to the wise conclusion "that, so far as possible, it was best just to say things that would do for both, because, like as not, if you meant to say something to Milly—it not being so understood—Tilly would answer, and *vice-versa*." But these two little Marberrys were warm friends of hers, and in those days, when so many people were estranged from the Bonifaces, she set a specially high value upon their friendship. Not that the Marberrys were in any sense Tories; only, as Dr. Marberry was rector of St. George's, they felt it their duty, as a family, to be kind to everybody in the church. Besides, it would have caused the twins a real pang to have been parted from Hazel, for, as they frequently asserted in the presence of less favored playmates, "Hazel Boniface was the cutest and nicest girl they had ever known."

Starlight's announcement of "Here come the Marberrys" had suggested to Hazel the idea of joining forces and all going along together. The children were delighted with the plan, as with any plan of hers, and sat down for a friendly chat with Starlight, while Hazel hurried away to summon Flutters. She found him feeding some withered clover heads to Gladys, as he sat comfortably on the top rail of the fence, enclosing the meadow where Gladys was allowed to disport herself on high days and holidays. She waited till she got close up to him, then she announced, "Flutters, you are to go to church with me this morning."

"To church!" he said, surprised, for he had not heard her coming.

"Yes, go put on the other suit, and meet me at the gate quickly."

She did not say "your other suit," feeling, naturally, a certain sense of personal ownership, as far as Flutters's outfit was concerned.

"All right, Miss Hazel," he answered, moving off with the alacrity of a well-trained little servant.

"Perhaps you will not care to go with me, girls," Hazel remarked, as she came down the path, some five minutes later, and looking very pretty in her dark red Sunday dress. "You see I am going to take Flutters."

"And why should we mind that?" chirped Milly Marberry in a high musical little key, and Tilly remarked, "Yes, why should we mind that?"

"Because I have no idea how he will behave. When I told him just now that he was to go to church with me, he said, 'To church!' as though he was very much surprised and had never been in one in his life."

"I suppose he'll sit still, though, if you tell him to," said Milly.

"Of course he will not speak if—" but Tilly's sisterly echo was interrupted by a significant hush from Hazel, and the next second Flutters was with them. Then the little party set off, the boys ahead together, and the girls behind.

"Where does Flutters come from, anyway?" asked Tilly.

"Yes, where from?" piped Milly.

"From England," Hazel answered, softly, "but he's a mulatto."

"A what?" simultaneously.

"A mulatto. They're a kind of negro tribe."

"Goodness gracious!"

"Gracious goodness!"

"Are the mulattoes wild and dangerous?" asked Milly, tremulously.

"Yes, I believe so; but then, of course, Flutters isn't so now. Civilization has changed him."

The Marberrys looked at Hazel with admiration; these occasional big words of hers constituted one of her chief charms in their eyes.

"But the truth is," Hazel continued, "I do not know very much about Flutters. He does not seem to like to talk about his history, and mother says I have no right to pry into it."

"I shouldn't think anybody who had been wild and savage could speak such good English," said Tilly, thoughtfully.

"Neither should I," said Milly.

"Well, that is queer," and Hazel looked puzzled. "I hadn't thought of that; but I'm certain his grandfather, if not his father, must have been wild and savage. I'm very sure the mulattoes used to be very ferocious."

"Where do the mulattoes live?" asked the Marberrys.

"I don't know," was Hazel's truthful answer. The fact was, as you have discovered, Hazel did not know what she was talking about. She had a trick of mounting an impression, and then of giving rein to her imagination and letting it run away with her, so that the first thing she knew she was telling you something she really quite believed was fact, but which was nothing of the sort. As a result she was sometimes credited with fibbing, and got into many an unnecessary scrape, but, you may be sure, Mrs. Boniface was doing all that she could to correct this unfortunate tendency.

Meantime the boys walked ahead, conversing with no little earnestness as to the comparative merits of two tiny sloop yachts, one of which was taking shape under Starlight's hand, and the other under Flutters's, and whose same comparative merits were to be put to the test, when completed, by a race on the waters of the Collect. At this point in their walk a turn of the road brought St. George's into sight.

"Ever been to church, Flutters?" Starlight asked, quite casually.

"Oh, yes, often."

"Episcopal?"

"Ye' ep," was Flutter's unceremonious answer; "but how large are you going to make your foresail?" not willing to be diverted from the all-engrossing subject.

"I shall give her all the sail she can carry, you may be certain." Starlight did not intend to furnish this rival yachtsman with any exact measurements. And so they talked on till they reached the little stone church, where service had already commenced. The Marberrys walked straight up to their pew, the very front one, but before they reached it each little face flushed crimson. At one and the same moment their two pairs of blue eyes met their father's, for he was leading the General Confession, and did not need to have them upon his book. Judging from the crimson on their faces, the look must have said, "There is no excuse for this, my little daughters; I am ashamed that you should be so late."

Hazel and Starlight and Flutter had the Boniface pew to themselves, but Hazel allowed Starlight to precede them into it, while she detained Flutter in the vestibule for a little seasonable advice. She had intended to administer it slowly and forcibly by the way. Now she had to compress it all into one hurried little moment. In her excitement she seized hold of Flutter's brown wrist, as she whispered, hurriedly, "Flutter, this is a church, where people come to worship. You will have to sit very still and not speak, only get up and sit down when I do, because part of the time it's wrong to sit down. So, Flutter, watch me very closely. I will find you the place in the Prayer-Book, but you had better not say the things that are written there, even if you can read them, 'cause they're probably things you do not understand at all, and don't know anything about, so it would be best not to say you believed them. You can sing the hymns, though; there won't be any harm in that, only sing very softly, for fear you don't get the tune right. Now that is all, I believe," putting her finger to her lip in a meditative way, and with an anxious frown on her face, as if fearing she had overlooked some important instruction. "Yes, that is all; now follow me in;" and Flutter following her, took his seat with a most decorous air, and without staring about with such gaping astonishment, as might, perhaps, be looked for in a boy of fourteen, who had

never seen the interior of a church before, so that Hazel at once felt much relieved. Her first duty, of course, was to furnish him with the proper page in the Prayer-Book, and her second to anticipate all irregularities in the order of service, by taking the book from his



"IT'S THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY, I THINK."

hands in ample time to supply him with the right place at the right moment. Now it must be confessed that all this was accomplished by Hazel in rather an officious and patronizing manner, but, unfortunately for her, there came a time when she herself was at a loss.

She did not know which Sunday it was after Trinity. Flutter *did*, and seeing her confusion anticipated Dr. Marberry by whispering, "*It's the eighteenth Sunday, I think.*"

Hazel thrust Flutter's Prayer-Book back into his hand, giving him one look, and such a look! It was dreadful to think that a thorough-going little church-woman could *ever* look like that, much less while the service itself was actually in progress.

Flutter felt "queer." He saw how much there was in that look of Hazel's, and wondered if he had been greatly to blame in the matter. Starlight, of course, witnessed the whole proceeding, and heard Flutter's whisper (as did every one else in the neighborhood), which betrayed his familiarity with the service, and Starlight himself wondered how he managed to be quite so well up on the subject.

But it was an awfully good joke on Hazel. When they had been discussing the matter, and he had said, "It would be awful fun to see how Flutter would act in church, provided he had never been there," Hazel had, of course, been quite right in saying that "People did not go to church to have awful fun;" but he could not help thinking that he had had a little fun all the same, only at Hazel's expense, and not Flutter's.

CHAPTER XV.

FLUTTERS COMES TO THE FRONT.



HERE were five of them abreast. The Marberrys, Hazel, Starlight, and Flutters, but no one was saying a word. The Marberrys had twice religiously tried to start up matters, but had failed utterly, and now they were anxiously bothering their little minds with the same question, so often reiterated by the Van Vleet parrot, of "Oh, dear, what can the matter be?" Starlight was chuckling inwardly, like the inconsiderate youngster that he was. Hazel was very angry, as she imagined with just cause, and Flutters was inwardly fluttering,

almost outwardly, in fact, so sorry was he to have offended his adored little mistress. If she would only say something. It was not his place to speak first, but he feared he would have to, for to his sensitive nature the silence was unbearable. Fortunately, however, just at this point, Hazel's indignation found vent; she came to a sudden stand-still, and although naught save the one word "*Flutters!*" escaped her, it doubled the five-abreast parallel line into a circle in less than a second.

"What have I done, Miss Hazel?"

"Done!"—then impressively lowering her voice—"you have

lied, Flutters" (the Marberrys winced). "Yes, I know it is a dreadful word, but there is no other word for it."

"What did I lie about?" Body-servant or no, Flutters knew when his little mistress was overstepping all legitimate bounds.

"You told me you had never been to church, and let me find all the places for you, when you knew all about it just as well as I did," and the little mistress was so greatly excited, that she felt very much afraid she should break right down and cry, which would certainly prove a most undignified proceeding.

"*Did* I tell you, Miss Hazel, that I had never been to church?" Flutters was able to speak calmly and was astonished at his own self-control, but then he knew he was in the right, and calmness comes easier when you know that. Hazel grew uncomfortable under Flutters's direct gaze. She had hardly expected this courageous self-defence. Come to think of it, *had* he actually said he had never been to church. Could it be, she wondered, that her imagination had led her off on another wild chase in the wrong direction? Yes, it could, foolish little Hazel, though you yourself are not yet ready to admit it.

"Perhaps you did not tell me so, Flutters," Hazel answered, "but you *let* me think it, which was very wrong and mean of you."

"Look out, Hazel," chimed in Starlight, shaking his head significantly, "ten to one you never gave him a chance to say a word about it. You have an awful, rushing way, sometimes, of taking things for granted."

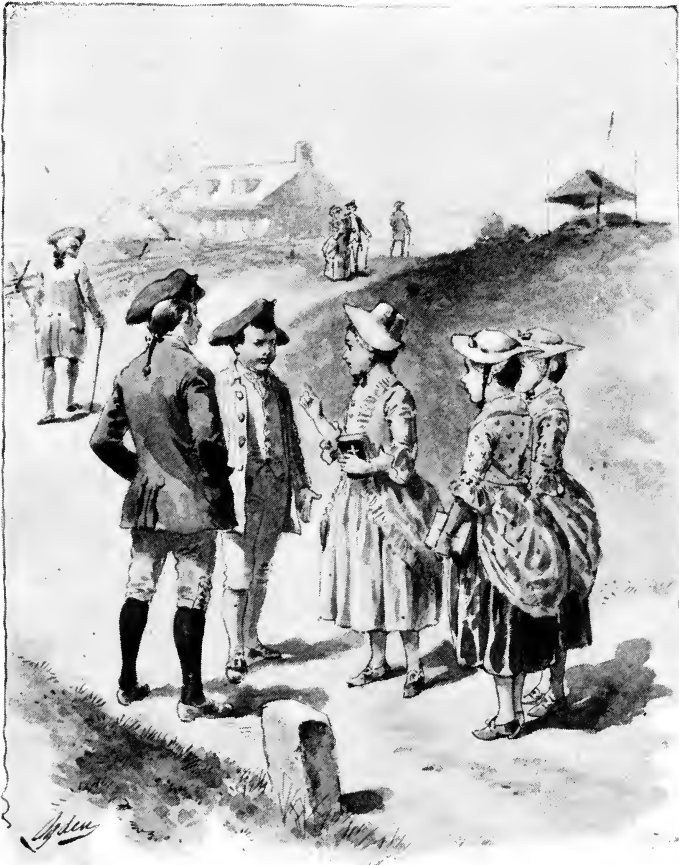
So Starlight was siding against her too, and Hazel looked toward the Marberrys for sympathy; but they were so ignorant of the facts of the case, and always so kindly disposed toward that little waif, Flutters, that both of them wore the most neutral expression possible.

Flutters's face flushed gratefully under Starlight's warm championship.

"No, Miss Hazel," he said, slowly, "you never gave me a chance to tell you, and until you caught hold of my wrist in the vestibule, and told me what I must do and what I mustn't, I did not know that you even thought I had never been to church."

"Didn't you really? Well, that's very queer," for when an idea was firmly implanted in Hazel's mind, she felt as though every one

ought, somehow or other, to be intuitively aware of it. However, she was going to try to be reasonable, and so she descended from a tone of evident displeasure into one of grieved forbearance.



THE WALK HOME FROM CHURCH.

“But, Flutters, if what you say is true”—Flutters straightened up under this insinuation, but unbent right away as Hazel wisely added, “and of course it is, then why, when I found the first place

in the Prayer-Book for you, did you not whisper, 'You need not bother, Miss Hazel, I know about the Prayer-Book,' or something like that, instead of letting me go on and find place after place for you?"

For a moment Flutters seemed at a loss what to answer, then looking her frankly in the face, he said, with charming simplicity, "I thought it would be more respectful not to say anything; and better to let you, being my little mistress, do just as you pleased without interfering."

Hazel showed she was touched by this confession; but Starlight could not resist the temptation to add, "besides, I warrant you, you told Flutters not to speak, when you collared him there in the vestibule."

"Yes, you did, Miss Hazel," said Flutters, truthfully.

"That may be," Hazel admitted with much dignity, "but, Job Starlight, I never *collared* anybody, if you please."

"Don't be touchy, Hazel. You know what I mean."

All this while the children had stood in a little circle right in the middle of the road, and more than one passer-by had looked on with an amused smile, wondering what was the cause of so much evident excitement. The Marberrys had noticed this, and now that matters were cooling down a trifle, suggested that they should walk on, so as not to attract so much attention. So they walked on, but of course they talked on too, and although Hazel was fast relenting toward Flutters, she was not quite ready to cease hostilities. One or two matters still required explanation. "Look here, Flutters," she said, "if you thought it was more respectful not to say anything, why didn't you keep quiet; and there's another thing I *should* like to have you tell me, and that is, how did *you* know it was the eighteenth?"

"Miss Hazel, when I saw you did not know what Sunday it was, I thought that as I happened to know, I *ought* to tell you."

"Oh, that was it; but, Flutters, people don't just happen to know things. They generally know *how* they came to know them."

Flutters looked troubled, and the Marberrys and Starlight felt very sorry for him, and wished Hazel would stop. But Hazel

wouldn't. That's one of the troubles with strong and independent natures, no matter whether they belong to big or little people. They feel everything so deeply, and get so wrought up, that on they go in their impetuosity hurting people's feelings sometimes, and doing lots of mischief. To be strong and independent and to know where "to stop," that is fine; but Hazel had not yet learned that happy combination. But Hazel's heart was all right; she wanted above everything else in the world to grow some day to be a truly noble woman, and there is not much need for worry when any little body really hopes and intends to be that sort of a big body. But you need not think that while I have been saying this little word behind Hazel's back (which, by the way, is not meant at all unkindly), that you have been missing any conversation on the part of our little church-goers. There hasn't been any conversation for ever so many seconds. Hazel is waiting for Flutters to speak, and Flutters is getting ready. At last he attacks the subject in hand, in short, quick little sentences, as if it was not easy to say what must be said.

"Miss Hazel, when I was at home I used often to go to church. I had a little Prayer-Book of my own. *Somebody* gave it to me; somebody that I loved. When I was in the circus I kept my Prayer-Book with me. Every Sunday I read it, from love of the somebody. Once in a great while when we would put up near a church I used to get leave to go to it. I went the very Sunday before I left the circus. I went to that very church where we have been to-day. I sat in the back seat, and I heard their father preach (indicating Milly and Tilly). It was a lovely sermon 'bout bearing things. That was five weeks ago, and that was the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, so I calculated up to to-day, and, Miss Hazel, when I ran away from the circus and dared not go back there were only two things I minded about—the Prayer-Book and old Bobbin. To run away from a dear little book that you loved, that's been a real comfort to you, when you hadn't scarce anybody to turn to—why, it seems just like running away from a dear old friend."

So that was the explanation of it all. Even Starlight felt touched by Flutters's narration, while actual tears stood in the little Marberrys' eyes. Hazel felt humiliated, an uncommon, but most beneficial sensation for that hot-headed little woman.

"Who gave you that Prayer-Book, Flutters?" asked the Marberrys—being blessed with less tact than sympathy.

"Flutters would have told us if he had wished us to know," said Hazel. And that considerate remark completely re-established the old friendly relations between Flutters and herself, and then for a while the five children trudged along in silence. Four out of the five were probably pondering over all that Flutters had told them, and wishing that they knew more about him. Flutters, feeling greatly relieved, was turning over in his mind a perplexing question suggested by something the Rector had said in his sermon that morning, for he was a thoughtful little fellow, and when a matter bothered him was not content to dismiss it without settling it to his own satisfaction.

"Do folks believe?" he said, after the manner of one who has slowly thought himself up to the point of putting a question, "do folks believe that God makes everything happen?"

"Of course they do," said Milly Marberry. Tilly pressed her lips firmly together and nodded "yes," in a way that meant there was no doubt whatever on the subject.

"Well, suppose a poor woman had just one little boy, and the little boy took the scarlet fever and died, did God make that happen?"

"Yes, He did," replied Milly and Tilly together, feeling, perhaps, that, as daughters of the Rector, the answering of such a question belonged to them. Starlight and Hazel willingly kept silent. They thought Flutters was leading up to something, and preferred not to commit themselves.

"Well, then," said Flutters, but not irreverently, "I'd like to know what He did it for."

Milly and Tilly showed their surprise at this question, but did not at once reply, trying, perhaps, to decide what answer their good father would make under similar circumstances.

"Perhaps God saw the little boy would not grow up to be a good man," Milly ventured, feeling sure she had heard something like that said.

"Perhaps," said Tilly, for occasionally the twins did launch out on independent lines of thought, "perhaps she loved the little boy too much, and so God took him to make her trust more just in Him."

Flutter waited a moment, as though to consider matters; then he said, seriously, "No, I do not believe what you say at all. I believe the little boy caught the scarlet fever from somebody, and just died because he wasn't strong enough to get over it."

"I don't believe it's right to think like that," Hazel volunteered, for the Marberrys looked very much shocked, "it's not believing in God at all."

Now Flutter had not set out upon this discussion without first having thought it out pretty clearly for himself, and so he was ready to answer—

"You are mistaken, I think, Miss Hazel," with the same little air of respect he always assumed in speaking to her, "because I believe in God just as much as any boy could, and yet I think that. I think God *lets* things happen instead of making them. He lets sickness and trouble come into the world, and so the sickness and trouble find the people out, and sickness kills them if their bodies are weak, and trouble kills them if their hearts and heads are, and—"

"But, Flutter," interrupted Starlight, "don't you believe God watches over people and cares for 'em?"

"Why of course I do, Starlight. If I hadn't thought that I don't know what I would have done sometimes; but this is what I think—I think He watches over us by helping us to bear things, and to get the best out of 'em, and although I'm not very old, I'm old enough to know that sometimes there is more good in a troublesome thing than in a thing that isn't troublesome at all. The people who are the kindest are often the people who have had the most trouble."

"Well," said Tilly Marberry, with considerable censure in her tone, "I never heard a little boy talk like this."

"Neither did I," sighed Milly, "and I should say such things ought to be left to grown-up people."

"Well, then," Flutter replied, "thinking 'bout things ought to be left to grown-up people, too, but it isn't. I may think *different* when I'm grown up, but I don't believe I'll ever think harder than I do now, and I can't help it either."

Meanwhile Hazel had been ransacking her brain for a half-remembered text, and now she had it. "What do you make out of

that verse about the Lord *chastening* whom He loves?" she asked.

For the moment Flutters looked puzzled. The Marberrys signalled each other by elevating their eyebrows as to the meaning of this last big word of Hazel's, and asked, simultaneously, "What's chastening?" Then for the moment Hazel looked puzzled, but Starlight came to her rescue.

"I think it's taking away from a fellow lots of people whom he loves. Having his mother die, and then his father, and then his little sister, and things like that."

This remark of Starlight's flashed the light again in upon Flutters's mind, and he found to his glad surprise that he was thoroughly prepared to answer Hazel after all; but he began by asking Starlight a question.

"But why, Starlight, does the Lord do that, do you think?"

"Why—so as to make a fellow resigned. I think that's what they call it. To make him just give up his own will."

"Excuse me," said Flutters, with the air of one whose convictions are very strong, "but I don't believe *that* either. I don't believe the Lord would take my father and mother and sister out of the world just because He loved me and wanted to make *me* better. I don't believe I'm important enough for that, nor anybody else. If they all died close together I should think it was because God's time had come for them, quite outside of me, and that then the thing for *me* to do, the thing that He meant, was just to bear it as bravely as I could."

This was a long speech for Flutters, but the children were sufficiently interested to follow every word of it, and Hazel asked, when Flutters ceased, "But then what *does* the chastening verse mean? It's in the Bible, and I suppose you believe the Bible?"

"Of course I believe it, but I know chastening doesn't mean anything like that. Perhaps it means letting all sorts of bothersome things come so as to have you get the best of them. A person what had never had any bother wouldn't be much of a person, I suppose."

"Well, we *have* had a talk," said Starlight, for at this point the discussion seemed to come to a natural close; and besides, they had almost reached the Boniface gate. A moment later the Marberrys

took an affectionate leave of Hazel, with a "Good-bye" to Starlight and Flutters, and trudged on to the rectory, half a mile farther up the road, wondering, perhaps, if what Flutters had said had been wrong, and provided they could remember it, if they ought not to tell their father.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed Hazel, carefully putting away her Sunday cloak and hat, "and to think that I thought the mulattoes were a savage tribe! Why, really, I believe I never knew a boy who seemed to think so right down into a thing as Flutters."



CHAPTER XVI.

COLONEL HAMILTON "TAKES TO" HARRY.



BRIGHT and early on the Monday succeeding the Van Vleet tea-party, Harry Starlight set out for his call upon Colonel Hamilton. It proved to be a clear, bracing morning, the kind of a morning to inspire hope in hearts five times as old as Harry's, only fortunately there are *some* hearts that never grow old at all, and to whom hope is just as true and beautiful at sixty as sixteen. The moment he closed the door of the kitchen behind him, he drew one great, deep breath, as though longing to take in, in a permanent way if possible, all the exhilaration of the invigorating air, all the marvellous beauty of the wonderful out-of-door world. There had been a heavy frost

the night before, but almost the first flash of sunrise had trans-

formed it into an army of glistening drops, save where here and there, under the protecting chill of sombre shadows, the grass-blades still were cased in sheaths of crystal. The river was gray and white-capped, for the west wind would not leave it still enough to reflect the cloudless blue overhead, and the "Gretchen" tugged at her chain with various little creaks and groans, as though an anchor and a furled sail were more than sail-boat nature could endure when such a breeze was blowing. Indeed, as Harry freed her from her moorings, she fairly seemed to bound out into the river with the keen enjoyment of a creature alive in every part. It is hard to picture that East River as it looked a hundred years ago, with wooded and grass-grown banks in place of wharves and warehouses, and with only an occasional sail, where to-day the great, unwieldy ferry-boats plow from shore to shore, and an army of smaller craft steam noisily hither and thither. Now and then Harry would pass a market-boat loaded to the water's edge with a tempting array of vegetables, and rowed by a marketwoman in her close-fitting Dutch cap, who would either wish him a cheery good-morning in matronly fashion, or bend lower over her oars, as became a young maiden. Half reluctantly did Harry hear the "Gretchen's" keel scrape the pebbly shore, and exchange the breezy breadth of the river for the city street, notwithstanding that street led straight up to Colonel Hamilton's office. Then, somehow or other, he did not feel quite so buoyant as at the start, for hope has a trick of wavering a little, as she actually nears the verge of any decision. What if some one had already secured the place? What if the Colonel should not take to him? for Harry had great faith in and great respect for what may be called "taking to people."

It so happened that he found only a boy in the Colonel's office, a very dark little specimen of the negro race, who was brushing and dusting away in a manner that said very plainly, "I's behin' time dis mornin'," which, by the way, was the rule and not the exception in the life of lazy little John Thomas.

"What time does Colonel Hamilton usually come in?" asked Harry, when he saw that the boy was by far too busy to pay any attention to him.

"'Long any minit; dat's how I's so flustered," he replied, breathlessly, and with that sort of haste which invariably makes waste, he

succeeded in upsetting all the contents of a generous scrap-basket exactly in the middle of the office floor. "Glory me!" was his one inelegant exclamation, and, dropping on to his knees, he began punching the accumulation of trash back into the basket, but with an energy that landed half of it upon the floor again.

"Look here, I'll tend to that," laughed Harry. "You see to your other work." John Thomas looked up surprised, but seeing the offer was made in good faith, took Harry at his word, and flew to the office washstand, which was sadly in need of attention.

Just at this point there was a step in the hall, and glancing up from his homely, self-appointed task, Harry's eyes met those of Colonel Hamilton, while the color flushed over his face.

"Well, my young friend," said the Colonel, evidently much amused, "who set you at that work?"

"I was waiting for you, sir," said Harry, putting the basket at one side, "and as your boy seemed to have been delayed, I was trying to lend a hand."

"Very kind of you, sir; and as John has a way of being delayed every morning, he would no doubt like to make a permanent engagement with you."

"I had rather you would do that, sir," was on Harry's lips, but he feared it might sound familiar; but Colonel Hamilton seemed to read his thoughts.

"Possibly you came to see about making an engagement with me," he said, kindly, looking for the moment most intently at Harry in a way that showed he was mentally taking his measure. Meanwhile he had hung up his coat and hat, and dropped into a high-backed, uncomfortable and unpainted wooden chair, very different from the upholstered, revolving contrivances that we find in offices nowadays.

"Yes, sir," said Harry, in answer to the Colonel's question, and still standing; "I heard that you wanted a clerk, and I should be very grateful if you would let me see if I could fill the place."

"What is your name?"

"Harry Starlight Avery, if you wish it in full, sir."

"Will you be seated, Mr. Avery?" said the Colonel, with his habitual kindly courtesy, whereupon John Thomas flourished a be-draggled feather brush over a dusty chair—the same one upon which

Hazel had sat during her recent important interview—and placed it near the Colonel's, with all the importance of a drum-major on parade.

"I have heard the name of Starlight before," Colonel Hamilton said thoughtfully, "but where I cannot remember." Then, and as though he had no time to devote to mere rumination at that hour of the morning, he asked, "Are you a native of New York, Mr. Avery?"

"No, sir; my home is in New London."

"Then you are a long ways from it now" (for distances were distances in those days); "how does that happen?"

"I enlisted on a privateer," Harry answered, coloring slightly.

"So that is how," and the Colonel gave him the benefit of another scrutinizing look.

"Have you ever had a position in a lawyer's office?"

"No, sir; I am sorry to say I haven't; but it's just the sort of position I have always wanted. Of course you would have to tell me just about everything at the start, but not more than once, I hope, sir."

This is the right sort of spirit, thought the Colonel, beginning to run through some papers on a letter-file, for, as usual, he had a very busy day before him.

"How long ago did you enlist on the privateer?" making a little memorandum of some other matters on a sheet of paper as he spoke.

"Nearly two years ago."

"How long were you aboard of her?"

"Only a month, sir."

"And where were you the remainder of the time?"

"On the 'Jersey,' sir."

There was no dividing of attention now, and the Colonel laid aside the quill pen he had just filled with ink.

"Do you mean to say you were a prisoner aboard of her?"

"Yes, sir."

"For nearly two years?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is enough for me. Any poor fellow that has braved the horrors of that den for even a month ought to have the best sort of

a chance. I will engage you on the spot, Mr. Avery. If you have been a 'Jersey' prisoner, that is enough for me. I am willing to try a 'green hand,' who has had to endure that experience."

"You are very kind, Colonel Hamilton," and Harry's grateful appreciation showed plainly in his face.

"Could you stay to-day," asked the Colonel, "and let me set you right to work at some copying? I think we can come to a satisfactory arrangement about terms when I am not so hurried."

Of course Harry stayed—stayed through one of the busiest and happiest days of his life; and not until twilight had long settled down on the river did he step aboard of the "Gretchen" and set sail for the old Van Vleet Farm.

When the wind is right in your favor, and you have little to do but mind your helm, you have a fine chance for a quiet think—that is, if you are any sort of a sailor; and Harry improved the opportunity and thought hard—thought of all that the day's good fortune might mean to him: of ability to pay his own way for the first time in his life; of a little money to be sent off now and then to the younger brothers in New London, and then, in a vague sort of a way, of a home of his own some day. Meantime all the while there would be the constant daily companionship with Colonel Hamilton himself, who seemed to him (as indeed to many another, and in the face, too, of his extreme youthfulness) at once the noblest, the kindest, and by far the greatest man he had ever met. What a pity, he thought, that he should have sided against Aunt Frances!

But of one thing Harry felt sure, which was that he had certainly "taken to" Colonel Alexander Hamilton; and there was another thing just as sure which he did not know about, and that was that the Colonel had decidedly "taken to" Harry.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE LITTLE GOLD GALLERY.



THE night for the first Dancing Assembly had come, and old Peter, John Thomas's father and the janitor of the Assembly room, had done more work in the last week than in all the whole five months between the two seasons of social gayety. In an hour now it would be time for the guests to arrive, and, arrayed in his best coat and knee-breeches, and with nothing further to do, Peter sat on a three-legged stool at one end of the hall, surveying his work with evident satisfaction.

Presently there was the sound of several pairs of feet on the flight of stairs that led up to the Assembly rooms, and Peter, craning his neck, tried to make out who it might be without taking the trouble to get up, for his old knees were very stiff from the unwonted exertions of the week.

Who it might be was quickly determined, for in a flash there stood before him what seemed to him a veritable crowd of children, though in point of fact there were only the two Marberrys, Hazel, Starlight, and Flutter.

"What you chilluns doin' heah? Dis heah ain't no place fur chilluns. You better go right 'long home agin, I reckon."

Peter tried to speak gruffly, but they were not in the least intimidated, knowing that it was all assumed.

"Peter, we have a great favor to ask of you," said Hazel, who seemed to be the ringleader of the little party.

"'Tain't no sort o' use, Miss Hazel; can't 'low it no how;" for Peter knew well enough what the favor was; "if I let you chilluns into dat gall'ry, you'll keep up such a snickerin' and gigglin', you'll 'sturb the whole Assembly. No, Miss Hazel; can't t'ink of it; can't 'low it no how."

"Peter," said Hazel, looking at him very searchingly, "are you going to let anybody in there?"

"Not a soul, Miss Hazel—dat is, not a soul 'ceptin' my John Thomas."

"Ah! I thought so," said Hazel, exultingly; "and it isn't fair, Peter, to do for Thomas what you won't do for us. We've come all the way into town just to see the dancing, 'cause mother said she was sure there wouldn't be any objection to our peeping through the gallery railing."

"Did she say dat, sure 'nuff, Miss Hazel?" And Peter put his head on one side, and looked at Hazel in a very suspicious manner.

"Yes, she did," said Tilly Marberry, coming to the rescue; "I heard her myself; and, Peter, we'll promise not to snicker."

"Nor giggle, either," said Tilly's other self.

"Which of you is which?" said Peter, slowly looking at the twins with knitted eyebrows.

"Oh, Peter, please don't stop to bother 'bout that now," pleaded Hazel, impatient of any digression from the main point; "but you *will* let us in, won't you?" whereupon the other children chimed in with such imploring entreaties that the old janitor relented, and, getting on to his feet with an evident twinge in his rheumatic knees, felt in his coat-tail pocket for the coveted gallery keys. The

good deed had its reward then and there, in the beaming and grateful faces of the troupe of little beggars.

The gallery in question was a sort of balcony, projecting from the wall at one end of the hall, midway between floor and ceiling, and to which access was had by a steep little spiral stairway. This gallery was intended for the musicians only; but between its gilded, bulging front and the part of the platform on which they sat was a space where half a dozen children might be comfortably accommodated. More than once, when some reception or dance was in progress, Hazel, with a few chosen friends in her train, had begged her way into this most desirable retreat, and that was why Peter knew "what was up" the moment he saw her.

When they entered the little gallery, they found John Thomas there before them, complacently installed in the most desirable place; but they were far too thankful to have gotten in at all to grudge him his privileged position.

It was a funny sight to see the little company established in a row behind the heavy gilded stucco work, which completely concealed them, yet offered such convenient little loop-holes and cranies, from which everything going on on the floor below could be plainly viewed. To be sure, the arrangement of the platform obliged them all to sit tailor fashion—rather a constrained position for those unaccustomed to it—but what did it matter about one's legs and back when one's eyes were to be feasted with lovely ladies and gallant gentlemen and the music they were to dance to would be ringing in one's ears.

"Doesn't the hall look lovely?" said Hazel, when at last she had adjusted her lower extremities as comfortably as circumstances would admit.

"Lovely!" answered the Marberrys, each with a sigh of deep appreciation, for it had not been an easy thing for them to gain permission to accompany Hazel, and this was to be their first introduction to the glories of a dancing assembly.

"How everything shines!" said Flutters, quite lost in admiration of the glittering brass sconces, with their bevelled mirrors and beautiful red candles, and wondering greatly how any floor could ever be brought to such a high state of polish.

"'Course it shines," said John Thomas. "It ought to shine.

My father hasn't been reachin' and rubbin', and kneelin' and polishin' fur free weeks fur nuffin, I reckon."

"Did you help him?" asked Flutters, with admiration.

"No, sah, I did not. I hasn't no time for polishin'. I assists in Colonel Hamilton's law office," and John Thomas proudly drew him-



"'I ASSISTS COLONEL HAMILTON,' JOHN THOMAS REPEATED."

self up till his woolly head grazed the ridge of the gallery rail above him.

"What," said Starlight, "are you the boy in Colonel Hamilton's office?"

"I assists Colonel Hamilton," John Thomas repeated, not being

willing to bring himself down to Starlight's offensive way of putting things.

"Yes, I've heard about *you*," said Starlight, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"W'at you heard, I'd like to know!"

"John Thomas," came a voice from below, "don't let me hear anoder word from you dis ebenin', else home you go to mammy right smart, I can tell you, and de oder chilluns long wid you too." Old Peter had shambled out to the middle of the floor to take one more satisfactory view of things in general, and just in time to hear John Thomas's excited tones. His words had the desired effect; the little gallery instantly relapsed into absolute silence, the six children fairly holding their breath for fear of the threatened banishment. People were beginning to come now. A few gentlemen were already on the floor, and the musicians, who had taken their places on the gallery platform, were drawing instruments, which would look funny enough to-day, from the depths of clumsy green baize bags, and beginning to "tune up."

"Tell me w'at you heard?" demanded John Thomas of Starlight, as soon as he dared to speak again.

"Oh, John Thomas, please don't!" begged Milly Marberry, putting her little hand most beseechingly on his sleeve; "we've never been to an Assembly before. We'd cry our eyes out if your father sent us home."

John Thomas yielded to this entreaty, but sullenly, as though he meant to have it out with Starlight some day or other. Any slur upon his character was just one thing that that young gentleman was determined not to endure, and the sooner Job Starlight and the rest of the world came to that wise conclusion, why, so much the better for everybody concerned—at least, so thought John Thomas.

It was a pity that at the commencement of the Assembly Hazel, Milly, and Tilly could not have been in two places at once, for while only an occasional couple strolled on to the dancing floor, the dressing-rooms were crowded. There would have been a peculiar pleasure for those little lovers of finery to see the pretty toilets gradually emerge from the concealment of long cloaks and shawls, and to have studied the charming vanities of peak-toed, high-heeled

little slippers as the protecting pattens were shaken off into the hands of maids, upon their knees before their "ladies." But at last the Assembly floor offered more attractions than the dressing-room, and a long line of couples, constantly reinforced by new arrivals, were promenading in stately fashion around the hall.

"There come the Van Vleets," exclaimed Starlight, as Miss Francesca and Miss Heide entered, each on the arm of an escort.

"And if there isn't Miss Pauline," whispered Tilly Marberry; "does *she* dance?"

"Dance!" said Starlight; "well, I guess you'll think so when you see her. She's just as graceful as a fairy."

"She's just as queer as a fairy, too," remarked Flutters. "I wouldn't care to be the one to dance with her; there'd be no telling what she might fly off and do next."

"It's very distressing about Miss Pauline," said Hazel, reprovingly; "and, Flutters, you have no occasion to speak like that." Hazel always seemed to be specially successful in mustering large words when she felt called upon to administer any reproof to this little servant of hers.

"No occasion!" said Flutters, significantly, for the recollection of an apple-tree and a crying maiden was not so far removed as to lose any of its poignancy.

"What do you mean?" questioned Hazel, with a puzzled frown.

"Oh, nothing particular," Flutters said, quickly, seeing what an explanation might lead up to, and then he succeeded in changing the subject by announcing the arrival of Captain and Mrs. Boniface.

"Oh, doesn't mamma look lovely!" and Hazel's happy little face flushed with pride.

"Yes; and just look at Josephine!" sighed the Marberrys, simultaneously, for those little women were so overcharged with delight as scarce to be able either to speak or breathe in quite regular and commonplace fashion.

"Ah! *she's* the girl," said Starlight, who, whether from honest admiration or a spirit of mischief, never lost an opportunity for extolling the virtues and attractions of Hazel's older sister.

"And she's drawn Harry Avery," added Hazel, for once in her life adroit enough not to betray any annoyance; "I don't believe she minds, either."

"Well, Harry doesn't mind, I know that much. Shouldn't wonder myself if he managed to have it come that way." Starlight evidently spoke from knowledge of facts, for, like as not, Cousin Harry had foolishly taken that small boy somewhat into his confidence.

This "drawing" that Hazel spoke of was a queer custom of the olden days. Partners for the evening were chosen by lot. They danced, walked, and chatted with no one else, and when the dancing was over partook together of such modest refreshment as rusks and tea. This arrangement was most advantageous for the young ladies who were not specially attractive, for by means of it the fairest and the plainest were treated exactly alike. Now, for all this information, and much more beside, as I told you in the preface, we are indebted to that delightful first chapter of Mr. McMasters's History; but although you may not be old enough to care to read that chapter for yourself, nor half old enough to be allowed to attend a Dancing Assembly, nor fortunate enough to gain entrance to a little mid-air gallery, where you could watch all the fine goings on unobserved, yet I believe you are quite old enough to understand one thing—and that is that the pleasure of those old-time assemblies must have depended altogether upon the partner that fell to one's lot. A wretched sort of a time, or an indifferent sort of a time, or a very good time indeed—all lay within the possibilities of that one little chance. So do you wonder very much, or do you blame them very much, if those old-fashioned beaux, with their powdered hair, velvet knee breeches, and silver shoe-buckles, sometimes "managed things," as Starlight said? At any rate, Harry Avery was supremely happy to have Josephine Boniface fall to his lot, and if he hadn't been guilty of "managing things" at all, why, all that remains to be said is that he was a very lucky fellow. Miss Pauline formed the only exception to this rigidly observed rule, as it was always an understood thing that her brother Hans should be her partner; but being, as Starlight said, "as graceful as a fairy," and quite as light on her feet, it often happened that some friend of the Van Vleets would beg a dance of Pauline, and give the faithful brother a chance for "a turn" with his partner in exchange.

"Why, there's Aunt Frances," exclaimed Starlight, suddenly spying her seated in a chair at the farther corner of the room. "Did she come in with the Van Vleets?"

"Yes, I think so; and doesn't she look a picture!" said Hazel, fairly feasting her eyes upon that much-loved lady. "And her dress, girls! *isn't* it lovely!" and Hazel, in her eagerness, gave Tilly Marberry, who sat next to her, a good hard hug. "When I am forty or fifty, or whatever age Aunt Frances is, I shall wear black velvet and soft old lace about my neck just like that. Now I shouldn't wonder"—Hazel spoke slowly, as if really giving the matter most thoughtful consideration—"I shouldn't wonder if Aunt Frances was as pretty as Josephine when she was a real young lady."

"I half believe I think she's as pretty now," answered Starlight, notwithstanding his constant championship of Josephine's superior charms.

"Who's she talking to, Starlight?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Starlight.

"Why, dat's Major Potter, a lawyer what practices down our way," volunteered John Thomas, "and dere! dere comes *my* Colonel and Lady Hamilton. Isn't she a booty? Where's your Aunt Frances now, Mars Starlight?"

"Just where she was before, John Thomas, the loveliest-looking lady in the room. Lady Hamilton *is* very handsome, though."

"Handsome! well, you'd better believe it; and de Colonel! now jus' look at him, chilluns. Isn't he just too elegant! He jus' ought to be a king, Colonel Hamilton ought ter, and he's dat kind, he wouldn't speak cross to de laziest pickaninny in de land."

"Then I suppose he never speaks cross to you, John Thomas," said Hazel, significantly.

"Dere ain't neber no 'casion, Miss Hazel," and John Thomas looked as though he considered her remark altogether uncalled for.

"Ain't dere neber no 'casion?" asked Starlight, perfectly imitating the darkey dialect. "How 'bout dat mornin' when you upset de trash basket in de middle of de office flo'?"

"Dat mornin' was a 'ception, Mars Starlight, and it seems to me your cousin, Mr. Avery, might fin' somethin' better to talk 'bout dan to be detailin' de little events of de office."

It was great fun to hear John Thomas go on in this fashion. He had the reputation of being the most amusing little darkey in the city, and when they were not completely absorbed in watching

the dancing, Hazel and Starlight managed between them to keep him "going," to the delighted amusement of the Marberrys.

Meantime the minute hand of the great white-faced clock at the end of the hall was marking quarter to eight in no uncertain characters, and Hazel had faithfully promised that at eight o'clock her little party should turn their backs on the festivities, no matter how alluring and absorbing they might happen to be at that particular moment. But it sometimes happens that matters of considerable importance come to pass within the limits of fifteen minutes—often, in fact, in much shorter time than that, and this was true of the particular fifteen minutes in question.

And now, as this is already a pretty long chapter, I propose that we stop right where we are, make a new one, and call it —

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE OF A RED-COAT THAN EVER.



WHILE Hazel and Starlight, Flutters, John Thomas, and the Marberrys were so hugely enjoying watching the people down there on the floor of the Assembly, it so happened that some of the people were not enjoying themselves at all. Indeed, quite the contrary; for not a few were acting unkindly, and others were being treated unkindly; and if there is any enjoyment for anybody in that sort of a proceeding, one ought to be thankful not yet to have discovered it.

You know how it came about that Colonel and Mrs. Boniface went to the Assembly; it was simply because they felt

they ought to. If the old friends were truly sorry for having been so unfriendly, would it not be ungracious for them to decline this invitation? Would it not look as if they themselves were still harboring ill-feeling? And you also know that Harry Avery had been consulted in the matter, and that his urgent advice had been, "Go, by all means." So the Colonel and his wife had decided to accept quite in the face of all their preferences, and dreading the ordeal far more than either was willing to confess to the other. But alas! for

the decision that cost them such a personal sacrifice, and alas! for the hopefulness of Harry's buoyant temperament; for if Colonel and Mrs. Boniface ever had reason abundantly to regret any step they had ever taken, it was going to this Dancing Assembly; and if ever two proud and sensitive hearts were stung to the quick, theirs were that evening. It seems that Harry was mistaken in thinking that the invitation had been sent because of a general desire to make amends to the Bonifaces. True it was that two members of the Assembly Committee had insisted upon their being invited, hardly thinking, however, that they would come; but alas! in case they did come some other members had resolved to make it very uncomfortable for them. Somehow or other nothing seems so completely to change a warm human heart into something as cold and hard as a stone as what men call a strong party feeling, and party feeling ran very high in those days in which our great-grandfathers lived a hundred years ago. That is to say, men felt so sure that their own opinions were the only right ones that they fairly hated those who did not agree with them.

And so it happened that, with cheeks crimsoned from the insults they had received, and with blood tingling to their very finger tips Colonel and Mrs. Boniface left the room, sending word to Josephine (who had been screened from any insult by Harry's chivalrous devotion) to follow them. Hazel suddenly missed them from the crowd below, and knew in a flash what had happened. Indeed, the color had flushed into her own round cheeks as she thought she saw a Mrs. Potter, whose husband was a leading Whig, pretend not to see that Mrs. Boniface had made a move toward shaking hands with her. But "No," she thought, "I must be mistaken; no lady would be so rude." So it would seem, little Hazel; but it often happens that things are not what they seem in this queer world of ours; and as Hazel's dear mother learned to her sorrow, several others who called themselves ladies could be just as rude as Mrs. Potter, and some of them yet more rude. Fortunately for the Marberrys and Starlight and Flutters, the clock was just on the stroke of eight when Hazel made her unhappy discovery, for she could not have borne to have sat there another moment looking down on that brilliant company, many of whom, looking so fine and attractive, were at heart so cruel.

"Time's up," said Hazel, starting to creep round to the little door at the back of the gallery, and not trusting herself to say more than that for fear a trembling voice should betray her suppressed excitement.

Hazel was the acknowledged commander-in-chief of that little party, and difficult as it was to turn abruptly from the fascinating scene, the children dropped obediently on to all fours, and followed in her train. The Marberrys' carriage was waiting at the door, and Flutters, after helping the others in, climbed onto the box beside Jake, the driver. It was wonderful the way in which he seemed always to know intuitively the "proper thing" to do. He was constantly placed on such an equal footing with the other children that it would have been only natural for him to have frequently forgotten that, after all, he was only Miss Hazel's little servant; but somehow or other he never did forget it; perfectly free in his manner, and never in any sense servile, yet always betraying a little air of respectful deference that was simply charming. Indeed, body-servant or no, all the Bonifaces had grown to actually loving little Flutters, and Flutters knew it and was radiantly happy.

All the way home Hazel tried to be as merry as before. It would be such a pity, she thought unselfishly, to spoil the Marberrys' good time; but she did not succeed very well.

"Are you tired, Hazel?" asked Milly, as they neared home.

"Yes, awfully tired," and with this admission the tears sprang into her eyes; but fortunately it was too dark in the carriage for any one to see them. "It's very uncomfortable," she added, "to sit with your legs curled under you so long as we had to there in the gallery."

"Do you think so?" exclaimed Tilly; "why, I could have sat there till morning, and never known I had a leg, it was all so lovely!"

"So lovely!" echoed Milly in a tone of evident regret that it was over.

"Here we are," said Hazel, as Flutters leaped down and opened the door for her; "good-night, Milly" (a kiss); "good-night, Tilly" (another kiss); "much obliged for the ride."

"Much obliged for the lovely time," the Marberrys called back,

for Jake, impatient to get home and to bed, had immediately driven on.

"Why, it looks as though your father and mother were home," Starlight exclaimed as they walked up the path.

"Yes, they are home, I know that," said Hazel, excitedly, "and Josephine is home, and I know too that they've had a horrid time, and that they'll never go to anything in New York again—never; and if there is a cowardly set of creatures in the world it's the spiteful old Whigs."

Starlight and Flutters stood aghast, while Hazel flew past them into the house, slamming the front door after her, as much as to say that no exasperating Whig should ever enter it again, not even if his name was Job Avery Starlight.

The boys sat down on the step of the porch and conversed in dazed, excited whispers as to what it could all mean.

Hazel flew up the stairs into her mother's room and into her mother's arms with one great sob.

"Why, Hazel, my little daughter, what is the matter?" and Mrs. Boniface, whom Hazel had found sitting in a low rocker at the window, still in the dress she had worn to the ball, drew Hazel's brown head on to her shoulder, and soothingly stroked the brown wavy hair; but the tears were in her own eyes, and her heart was very heavy.

Hazel could not speak at first for crying, but the caressing touch of that dear hand was wonderfully calming, and presently she was able to say, "I know all about it, mother. I know they treated you shamefully. I saw that horrid old Mrs. Potter when she—"

"Hazel! Hazel, dear, you must not talk like this."

"But it's true, every word of it is true, and tell me" (and Hazel straightened herself up and looked through blinding tears into her mother's face), "didn't they insult you? didn't they treat you very rudely, and didn't you all come home on that account?"

"Well, they certainly were not very kind, Hazel, and it seemed best for us to come home; but it is not worth caring too much about, you know."

"And to think how friendly Mrs. Potter *used* to be, and how much she pretended to think of you, mother," and Hazel, becoming a little less excited, thoughtfully turned the little turquoise ring on



"WHY, HAZEL, MY LITTLE DAUGHTER, WHAT IS THE MATTER?"

her finger round and round, and shook her head sadly from side to side, as though her faith in human nature was forever shaken, as indeed it had reason to be.

It was a pretty picture, albeit a rather sad one, the mother and daughter, in the graceful costumes of a hundred years ago, sitting there in the low studded room, dimly lighted by the little rush-light on the mantel—a high narrow mantel, with the glowing embers on the andirons beneath it crackling loudly now and then, after the manner of a wood fire that is slowly dying out. An oblong mirror, hung at a wide angle from the wall, surmounted the high mantel, and reflected the little rocker with its double load, and the pretty old-fashioned drapery at the window. It was not often that that little mirror, nor any other mirror for that matter, had the chance to frame a picture for itself full as lovely as ever artist dreamed of.

But while Hazel and her mother were talking, and Hazel herself was growing calmer and Mrs. Boniface's heart lighter with the effort to cheer her, some other things were happening in which we have an interest. Captain Boniface was striding along the road that led on to the Marberrys, trying to walk off the angry feelings that threatened to get the mastery over him. There is nothing like a good brisk walk in bracing air to get a feverish, excited mind into normal condition, and the Captain knew it; but when the force of the angry mood had spent itself, there still was left to him a sense of sad hopelessness for which he saw no remedy. To have a little family on one's hands and no money to care for them is enough to make the bravest heart heavy; but to have reached that point, and at the same time to see every chance of ever getting on one's feet again absolutely taken away, is enough to break a man's spirit. And matters had come to just that pass that evening with Captain Boniface. If the old friends had at last shown themselves friendly, he would have felt there was a hope of his making his services valuable to some of them, as indeed there would have been, for every one acknowledged Captain Boniface to be a man of rare ability. But it had now been shown him very plainly that there was no use in longer trying to stem the tide of hate and prejudice that set so strongly against him, and with the future a hopeless blank, he finally turned his face homeward. But the other thing that was happening, and in which we too have an interest, was of a cheerier

sort, and was taking place at the Assembly, which had only fairly gotten under way when the Bonifaces left it.

That old-fashioned law of a partner for the evening, to be chosen by lot, of course applied only to the young folks, and the more staid, middle-aged, and elderly people were free to chat with each other, else why should they have cared to go to the ball at all?

Now it happened that Aunt Frances, who was quite in ignorance of the sad experiences of the Bonifaces, was having a most satisfactory conversation with a Mrs. Rainsford, a near neighbor, whom she had not seen since her flight from home nearly two years before, for Mrs. Rainsford was able to answer a great many questions which Aunt Frances had been longing to ask about her own home, and the care it was having.

"No, I should not think the place had been greatly abused," said Mrs. Rainsford, while Aunt Frances sat, an eager listener. "Captain Wadsworth moved his men down to the barracks at Fort George a month ago, and since then he has been giving the house a thorough overhauling. You know he has resigned his commission, and intends to remain in this country."

"Yes; and I know, too, that he intends to remain in my home," sighed Aunt Frances. "I wonder if he would sell it to me, though, for that matter, it's as much mine to-day as it ever was. But there's no use to talk about that either, for I have saved from the wreck barely money enough to live upon."

"But, Miss Avery," said Mrs. Rainsford in a serious whisper, that was scarcely audible above the music, "I'll tell you one thing: I do not believe Captain Wadsworth *will* remain in your house very long."

"Indeed! why not?" and Aunt Frances's elevated eyebrows betrayed her surprise.

"Why, because it is going to be so very uncomfortable for all Loyalists here in the city."

"I do not quite see what you mean, Mrs. Rainsford."

"No, of course not, dear," replied Mrs. Rainsford (seeming to regard Aunt Frances in the light of an older daughter, though, in point of fact, there was but little difference in their ages.) "No, of course not; your kind heart would never dream of such things as are happening on every side. The leading Whigs, now that the

Revolution has been successful, say that they'll make this town too hot to hold a single Tory, and, mark my words, they'll do it, too. Perhaps you haven't noticed how the Bonifaces were treated to-night ; they went home some time ago."

"Why, Mrs. Rainsford, can that be possible?" questioned Aunt Frances, looking vainly about the room in search of her friends; "I call that cruelty of the most unwarrantable sort."

"Yes, it must be very humiliating to say the least; but then they have brought it upon themselves, you must remember," for Mrs. Rainsford was herself a most ardent Whig, and thought the Loyalists, whether English or American, should be made to pay very dearly for their behavior.

"You ought to have seen your garden this summer, Miss Avery," continued Mrs. Rainsford, reverting to their former subject. "Captain Wadsworth must be very fond of flowers. He took the best of care of it."

"I think I could not have borne to see it, Mrs. Rainsford."

"No, perhaps not, dear child ; and to think that you really have Alexander Hamilton to thank for it all. You must hate him. He is here to-night, you know, with his young wife. I don't wonder she turned the heads of the officers at Morristown. You know she went to visit her aunt while Washington had his headquarters there, and Hamilton was his aide-de-camp, and fell in—"

"Sh—" interrupted Aunt Frances, who saw that Colonel Hamilton was not very far off, and might easily overhear what they were saying ; and, indeed, he was not far off, for the very good reason that, in the company of his friend, Major Potter, every step was bringing him nearer.

Imagine, if you can, Aunt Frances's surprise when Major Potter, whom she knew quite well, paused before her, and bowing low, with old-time grace and courtliness, said slowly, "May I take the liberty, Miss Avery, of presenting my friend, Colonel Hamilton?"

Aunt Frances was, of course, greatly confused, though too much of a lady to betray it ; but Mrs. Rainsford, astonished beyond measure, and not always at her ease, was quite glad to slip away from an interview that promised to be, to say the least, embarrassing.

Colonel Hamilton took the seat she left vacant. "I begged the

favor of an introduction, Miss Avery, and am very glad to meet you," he said, politely.

"I must not doubt your sincerity, Colonel Hamilton," Aunt



"MAY I TAKE THE LIBERTY, MISS AVERY, OF PRESENTING MY FRIEND, COLONEL HAMILTON?"

Frances replied with no little dignity, "but perhaps you do not recognize in me the Miss Avery whom you lately defeated in the courts."

"On the contrary," replied the Colonel with a deferential air, for Aunt Frances was by many years his senior, "that is the very reason why I wished to meet you. I feel myself to have been the cause—"

"Excuse me, Colonel Hamilton, but I desire neither apologies nor sympathy;" for with all her sweetness, Aunt Frances was high spirited; she thought the Colonel's manner was a little patronizing.

But Colonel Hamilton was high spirited too, and was on his feet in a moment. "It was not my intention to offer either sympathy or apologies. I bid you good-evening, Miss Avery."

But Aunt Frances said quickly, "In that case I should prefer you to remain, Colonel Hamilton."

"Thank you," and the Colonel, with no little dignity, resumed his seat, while Aunt Frances condescended to add:

"I did not mean to be rude, but I wished you to understand my position."

"It was because I wished you to understand mine that I sought this interview, Miss Avery; but I see I have need to be very careful as to my choice of words."

Aunt Frances smiled, as much as to say, "Quite right, Colonel Hamilton."

"I hope you realize," he said, "that my argument in Captain Wadsworth's case was founded on the most sincere convictions;" and the Colonel half betrayed the admiration which Aunt Frances somehow inspired in him, notwithstanding her high-spiritedness.

"I never questioned that, Colonel Hamilton."

"So I felt I had reason to believe, when I found you had urged your nephew to make application for the vacancy in my office."

"Why, I told Harry it was hardly necessary to volunteer the fact of our relationship," said Aunt Frances, with unconcealed surprise.

"He evidently did not agree with you then, for he had been with me scarce twenty-four hours before he told me he was your nephew. I suppose you thought, if I knew it, that it might count against him; on the contrary, let me assure you it has helped him. It is no light thing, Miss Avery, to have done any one an injury, whether from conscientious motives or not; and I shall welcome

every chance to atone for it that comes within my power. I can imagine, in part at least, what it must mean to be banished from the home of a life-time under any circumstances, and especially when you feel that you have still a perfect right to be there."

This looked a little like sympathy on the Colonel's part, but it was too kindly meant to be rejected. They were treading, however, dangerously near the region of Aunt Frances's proud sensitiveness, so she changed the direction somewhat by asking, "But Harry is able to rise on his own merits, is he not, Colonel Hamilton?"

"Abundantly; that was one thing I desired to tell you. He has unusual capacity, and is remarkably efficient. I think his future assured. As for me, it is a great satisfaction to know you do not question my sincerity. And now, Miss Avery, I will not detain you longer, and will say good-evening."

"Good-evening, Colonel Hamilton."

And so the Colonel went back to his pretty young wife in the farther corner of the room, and Aunt Frances, with a tumult of thoughts in her heart, rejoined the Van Vleets, and was glad to find them making ready to go down to the clumsy barge, which, manned by two of the farm hands, was waiting to carry them home across the moonlit river. How much she had to think over; and what had Colonel Hamilton told her but that he would lose no chance to atone for what his duty, as he understood it, had compelled him to do. But one thing Colonel Hamilton had not told her, but which was very true, nevertheless, and that was, that one of the strongest impulses toward this same atoning had come to him in the form of a call from a very earnest and winsome little maiden one sunny September morning. "Yes, what may it not mean?" thought Aunt Frances, and a hope that she had not dared to cherish for a long, long time shaped itself once more before her. Perhaps it might come about that she should have her home again some day; surely it was not impossible, since Colonel Hamilton himself was enlisted in her favor. And *this* was the man whom she thought her worst enemy—whom she had said she would go a long way to avoid meeting. Very thankful was she now that the Colonel had given her no opportunity to carry out her intention. So there is this comfort: if some sorry things happened at the

Assembly, some other things happened that were not sorry at all.

Meanwhile poor Starlight and Flutters sat shivering on the front porch. Captain Boniface had come home, but had quietly entered the house at the rear, and the children had not heard him.

"Really, I think we had better go in now," said Flutters, as though he had brought the same inducement to bear upon Starlight several times before.

"You may go if you like," answered Starlight. "It's different with you, you live here; but you don't catch *me* going in at a door that's been slammed in my face, unless the some-one who slammed it comes out and gets me."

So Flutters stretched and yawned and shivered a moment longer, and then decided to quit the dreary scene.

"Now, don't you tell Hazel that I'm out here, Flutters. Promise me."

"Not if she asks me?"

"No, not if she asks you fifty times." Starlight was angry, and not without reason, but he did not believe impetuous Hazel would give him another thought, and so he looked about to see how he could most comfortably pass the night on the porch, for he knew nowhere to go at that late hour. Perhaps it *was* a pity for a fellow to be so proud, but he could not help it. He wondered if other people's pride made the blood rush so hotly through their veins, and made their hearts thump like trip hammers; there was one good thing about it, though: it helped to keep him a little warmer out there in the chill November evening.

Flutters groped his way forlornly to bed, for all the lights were out in the house. He longed to knock at Hazel's door and tell her about Starlight, and his hand actually doubled itself in a preparatory way as he passed her door; but no, it would not do. Starlight would never forgive him; besides, he had promised.

But fortunately it was not to be an out-all-night experience, after all, for Starlight. Hazel's room was directly under the roof of the high, pillared porch, and as, just before getting into bed, she leaned out to close the blinds, so that the morning sun should not wake such a tired and sorrowful little body too early, she saw some dark thing lying under the mat on the porch. At first she thought it

was the Marberrys' dog, who occasionally made them a visit, so she called, "Bruno ! Bruno !" in a penetrating whisper, but the dark object showed no signs of life. Then she said, "Who is it?" and the dark object moved a little and replied sullenly, "Who do you suppose?"

"Why, Job Starlight, what are you doing out there; you'll catch your death of cold."

"I know it," said Starlight, for by this time even his pride had cooled down a little, and his teeth were chattering, "and there'll be no one to blame for it but yourself, Hazel Boniface."

"What do you mean?" asked Hazel; but as she spoke a conviction of just exactly what he meant swept over her. "Haven't you been in since I left you on the porch?"

"No, I haven't been in since you slammed the door in my face and said if there was a cowardly set of spiteful old creatures in the world it was the Whigs."

"I did not call *you* a—" and then Hazel realized that it was very foolish, as well as very cold, to stand talking there in that way, so she called down, "But wait a minute, and I'll come and let you in." Then she closed the shutters and hurriedly slipped into her wrapper and slippers, and in a twinkling the hall lamp was lighted and the hall door thrown open; but Starlight was in no hurry to enter—not he; he was going to see this thing through in right dignified fashion, notwithstanding, now that the prospect looked more cheerful, he could himself see a funny side to the proceeding.

"I did not mean *you* were cowardly or spiteful, Starlight," Hazel said again. "I meant all the other Whigs. Do, please, come in."

"Then why did you slam the door in this Whig's face, I'd like to know," and Starlight was so gracious as to advance as far as the broad, old-fashioned door-sill; "besides, all the other Whigs are not spiteful and cowardly. Aunt Frances isn't, and—"

"Starlight," interrupted Hazel, "this is very mean of you. If you knew what we'd had to bear to-night you wouldn't blame me for anything. I was very angry, I know, but I am very sorry, and now—won't you please come in?"

Certainly this was as much as the most aggrieved of individuals could desire, and Starlight walked in, and dignity and resentment and everything else were forgotten as Hazel with tearful

eyes told him of the evening's experiences. "Yes," she said at the close of her narration, "I saw Mrs. Potter with my own eyes refuse to shake hands with mamma, and if it hadn't been time then to come home I do not know what I ever should have done."

Starlight drew a deep sigh, but Hazel had grown a full inch in his estimation. It was real plucky in her to have kept her forlorn discovery to herself all the way home; he could almost understand now how she had slammed the door when she reached it. But what a shame it was that a family like the Bonifaces should be so shamefully treated! "Well, it's too bad, Hazel, that's all I can say," he said; "but I suppose we may as well go to bed. It must be very late."

"Why, where is Flutters?" asked Hazel, for the first time recalling his existence.

"Here," answered a voice from the top of the hall stairway; "I was just coming down to see if I could not make Starlight come in."

"I don't believe anybody could have *made* him," said Hazel; "the Starlights must be a very proud family."

"So must the Bonifaces," answered Starlight, with the shadow of a smile; "but, then, I like proud families."

"And so do I," said Hazel.

A few moments afterward the little trio separated, and with the thought of "Better late than never," Starlight crept gratefully into the bed of the little hall room, whose blankets and coverlid had been carefully folded back for him, full five hours before, by Dinah's kind black hands.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SAD LITTLE CHAPTER.



NOT a bright outlook certainly, but then, you see, it is to be only a little chapter.

Some people think that children's books ought to be cheery and bright from cover to cover, and so they ought—that is, for the very little children; but when they have gotten beyond the days of rhymes and jingles and colored pictures, and have wit enough and appreciation enough to enjoy a chaptered story, then I, for one, think the stories should be true to life. To be sure, the charm of such delightful and purely impossible tales as “Alice in Wonderland” and “Water Babies” lies in the fact that they do not pretend to be true to anything in the world save the enchanting caprice of the people who write

them; but when one comes to place a story in a real time, and put real people in it, then it is bound to be true to the real things.

Then one certainly does not need to be, say, more than seven

years old to get at least an inkling of the truth, that the real things of life are not always bright things. But there is no use of dwelling at too great length upon these same sorrowful experiences, and so for that reason we are going to try to make this a short chapter. And now, to tell you right away what the sad thing was, for fear your lively imagination should be conjuring up something yet more sad than the reality, though the reality was sad enough, since it was nothing more nor less than that, when Captain Hugh Boniface woke on the morning after the Assembly, he found that he could move neither hand nor foot. The eager mind worked as actively as ever, but not a muscle would respond to the great, strong will, and the Captain knew—knew beyond all hoping—that he was completely paralyzed, and that in all probability, as far as ever rendering any real service to that blessed little family of his was concerned, he had better, from that time, be out of the world than in it.

It is needless to tell you very particularly with what foreboding the alarming news spread through the little household, nor how breathlessly they all waited for old Dr. Melville's verdict as he came from the Captain's room a few hours later. Nor of how, in spite of his encouraging words, that bade them be hopeful, they read that in his kind old eyes which plainly told them that he felt there was little enough to ground any real hope upon.

"Yes," said Dr. Melville, gravely, as Mrs. Boniface followed him to the door, at the close of one of his professional visits, "I feared something of this sort might be in store for the Captain. He has been into my office several times complaining of certain wretched benumbing feelings that we doctors dread to hear acknowledged. But it's not strange, Mrs. Boniface, not strange at all; he's been through enough to break down the strongest constitution. There was a sight of mischief already done when they brought him home from Lexington in '75, and then all these years of worry and excitement have not helped matters."

"But, doctor," said Mrs. Boniface, nerving herself to ask the question, "do you think he will never be any better?"

"I doubt if he ever walks again, Mrs. Boniface."

"Do you mean, Dr. Melville, that it is your opinion that he never *will* walk again. You must be very frank with me, else I cannot tell how to plan for the future."

"Well, then, since you are a brave woman, and I know you mean what you say, I will give you my honest opinion, which is this: that your good Captain will probably, at least in a degree, regain the use of his hands and arms, but never, I fear, of his lower limbs."

It was not easy for Mrs. Boniface to hear her fears put thus plainly into words, but it was best, she felt sure, that she should know the worst.

Meantime the days dragged wearily along for Captain Boniface, and yet brought with them one glorious revelation. Never before had he known quite so fully what an all-powerful love there was in his heart for that dear wife of his. It was a privilege simply to be able to watch her as she moved so quietly about the room, and to listen to the sweet familiar voice; and was it not abundant cause for thankfulness that he was still in the same world with her, though no longer able to move about in it? But what were they going to do? That, of course, was the thought that gave him greatest anxiety. The sum of money in the bank had been growing more and more slender with every year of diminished income, until now there was scarce enough left to tide them over more than another twelve months, and then only with the strictest economy. But the good Captain did not have to meet this dread question alone, and in the twilight of a November afternoon he had talked it all over with his wife, and as the result of that long, quiet talk they had decided that Mrs. Boniface should write for aid to her father, a clergyman, living alone in a little ivy-grown rectory in the South of England. But it was not easy to come to this decision. They hesitated to intrude their heavy anxieties upon the good old man, whose own income was by no means ample. But there was simply no one else to whom they could turn, and they knew he would gladly give them any help within his power.

"And now, Hugh, there is nothing for us to do but to wait till the answer to my letter comes, and do let us try not to worry," said Mrs. Boniface when the long talk was over, and they did try, and they succeeded, and right in the face of the heaviest trial they had ever known there was peace and even an added sweetness in the Boniface home life. The new trouble knit all hearts closer together; they realized more keenly than ever before how much it was just to have each other, and they cared far less than such a little while ago

they would have thought possible for the insults of people who, after all, had been friends only in name. But half the secret of the bravery of the little household lay in the fact that the Captain himself was so brave; but often, of course, his courage was strongly tested; seldom more strongly than when little Kate would come running to the side of his bed, and he felt himself powerless to lift her to a seat beside him or to romp with her as he used to love to do.

One afternoon, when he was alone in the room, he heard the patter of her little feet on the stairway. He could count each step, for, after the necessarily slow fashion of very little walkers, she had need to plant both feet on one step before attempting another. But at last the patient little climber was where she wanted to be, and said, without stopping to think, "Lift me up, papa, please."

"Ah! Kate, you always forget papa can't do that," and the Captain's eyes grew misty.

"Oh, yes, I did forget," Kate answered, with a world of regret in her tone; and then she laid her chubby head on her father's arm and tenderly stroked the great brown hand as though she loved him more than ever now, and for the very reason that he was so helpless.

"Kate," said her father, when he felt sure that he could speak and yet keep his voice steady, "you are such a darling, Kate."

"Mamma said that a little while ago," answered her little ladyship calmly, "and Josephine said it yesterday twice, and then Hazel said something like it too. I *deess* I was never quite so nice as lately."

"I guess you were never quite such a comfort," smiled the Captain. "But then you must not grow too set up about it."

Kate did not pay much attention to this last remark; she had decided on a little plan, and was putting it into execution. She pushed a chair to the side of the bed and mounted, by aid of its round, to its seat; from there it was an easy climb to the bed; and then, shoving the chair away with a push of her little foot, she turned to her father with a sigh of honest satisfaction, such as no mere "lifting up" could possibly have occasioned.

Evidently she had come to stay, the blessed little sunbeam, and straightway the Captain began to rack his brain for the story that he knew well enough in a moment would be asked for, and for the sort that would be likely to keep her attention longest. No one



"SHE PUSHED A CHAIR TO THE SIDE OF THE BED."

could tell so good a story as the Captain, and no one could tell it as well—at least, that was the verdict of Starlight and Flutters, of Hazel and the Marberrys, and a few other little folk who now and then had the pleasure of hearing him. Little Kate was delighted with the fact that she was to be favored with “the first story since papa fell ill,” and, I fear, took a little selfish delight in the fact that she was the only listener. As for the story, it proved a fine one, with some very queer little people in it, who did most outlandish things, and Kate sat entranced till it was finished, and then, laying her head down on her father’s shoulder, “just to think it over,” fell fast asleep instead, and did not waken, even when the Captain, hearing Josephine’s step in the hall, called her in to throw something over her. And then, after a while, what with Kate’s regular breathing as she lay on his helpless arm, and what with the light in the room growing dim and yet more dim as the glow faded out of the sunset, the Captain fell asleep too, and all was so tranquil and peaceful that it seems almost as though we had made a mistake in calling this “A Sad Little Chapter.”

CHAPTER XX.

FLUTTERS COMES TO A DECISION.



FLUTTERS had something on his mind, and this in addition to all the cares and anxieties of the Bonifaces, which he took upon himself every whit as fully as though he actually belonged to the family. But the something in question was a little private affair of his own, an affair, however, that insisted upon filling most of his waking thoughts, and finally, after looking at it in every possible light, he arrived at a decision.

When a person has been thinking about a matter and turning it over and over in his mind, a decision is a glorious thing to come to. It is such a relief, after standing helpless in a perfect maze of doubt and hesitation, to find a straight path opening up before you. At any rate, Flutters's sensations were quite of that order, as late one afternoon he went to Mrs. Boniface and asked if she could spare him to go into town for a few hours.

"Certainly, Flutters, if it is necessary;" for it was the first time

Flutters had made a request like that, and she wondered what the little fellow was up to.

Flutters seemed to read her thoughts and answered, "It is necessary, Mrs. Boniface, but I would rather not tell you what I want to go for, if you are willing to trust me."

"Certainly, I'll trust you, Flutters," was the answer that made his heart glad; for it is such a fine thing to be thoroughly trusted, and the haste with which he donned his coat and hurried from the house showed that, at least in his estimation, the something to be done was as important as necessary.

Along the frosty road, in the November twilight, the little fellow trudged at a brisk pace, now and then breaking into a full run, as though in his eagerness he could not brook the delay of sober walking. White, fleecy clouds were scudding across the sky, as though making way for the moon which shone out whenever they would let her, and whose silvery beams were following so closely in the wake of the daylight as to create one earth night in which, as in Heaven above, there was to be no darkness at all.

But Flutters, like many another preoccupied fellow-mortal, saw nought of its beauty, only noting his surroundings sufficiently to take the straightest road to his destination.

Finally, he brought up at the barracks of Company F at Fort George, which company, as you remember, we learned from Mrs. Rainsford, was no longer quartered at the Avery homestead.

"Is Sergeant Bellows here?" Flutters asked, breathlessly, of one of the first men he met.

"He be," answered the man, with provoking slowness, "but I doubt if he'll see ye the night, he turned in early with a headache."

Flutters looked crestfallen. "You sail for England day after to-morrow, don't you?"

"We do that," answered the man, "and it's with pleasure we'll be after shaking the dust of the place off us."

"But I must see Sergeant Bellows before he goes," said Flutters, pathetically. "Do you think he'd mind if I disturbed him just for a minute?"

"Maybe not," said the man, "the Sergeant's that good-natured. You'll find him in bunk No. 6, in the front room above-stairs."

So Flutters climbed the stairs and entered the great cheerless

room, with its row of uncomfortable-looking bunks lining the wall. A candle was burning in a tin candlestick at one end of the room. Flutters went on tip-toe and brought it so as to inspect the numbers of the bunks, and make no mistake, for he could see that two or three other men had also "turned in"



" 'WHO'S THERE ?' ASKED SERGEANT BELLOW'S."

No. 6 was half-way down the room. "Sergeant Bellows," said Flutters, in a penetrating whisper, screening the candle flame with his hand, so that it should not shine in the Sergeant's face.

"Who's there?" asked Sergeant Bellows, raising himself on one elbow and bewildered at the sight of his unexpected visitor.

"It's only me, Flutters, and I hope your headache isn't very

bad, 'cause I wouldn't have disturbed you for the world, only I almost had to."

"Oh, that's all right," said the Sergeant, kindly, "but it'll take me a moment to get my wits to working, although I wasn't rightly asleep either. Here, set the candle on the shelf, and run get that stool yonder for yourself."

Flutters felt relieved thus to have the Sergeant take in the situation at a glance, and realize that he had come with a purpose.

"I was coming up to Kings Bridge to-morrow to say good-bye," the Sergeant said, rather sadly, when Flutters had seated himself beside the bed. "How are they up there?"

"Why, they're not well at all—that is, you know, don't you, about the Captain's being paralyzed all over?"

"No, by gracious! paralyzed! Do you mean he can't move hand nor foot?"

Flutters sorrowfully shook his head yes, as though words failed him.

"You don't mean it," said the Sergeant, sorrowfully; "but tell me all about it," and then Flutters told him everything about the Bonifaces that he thought could by any possibility be of any interest to him, till at last he felt justified in introducing his own little matter.

"But what I came to see about was this—"

"Oh, to be sure," said the Sergeant. "I had almost forgotten to wonder what brought you here."

"Well," said Flutters, solemnly, "I have a great favor to ask of you, Sergeant."

"You're not giving me much time to do it, then," said the Sergeant, "seeing as every British soldier quits the city day after to-morrow."

"That's the reason I came," answered Flutters, excitedly, "it's in England that I want the favor done."

"Why, what have you to do with England, I'd like to know?" with evident astonishment.

"Why, England was my home," Flutters answered, rather proudly; "don't you know I belonged to an English circus?"

"Why, so you did; I'd forgotten about that." And then there was a little pause, while the Sergeant waited for further develop-

ments, and while Flutters was meditating how he had best put his case.

"I once heard you say, Sergeant, that your old home was somewhere in Cheshire, and that's where my father lives. His name is Wainright."

"Then your name is Wainright, too," said the Sergeant; "Flutters Wainright, eh?"

"No, Arthur Wainright's my name. Flutters is a name they gave me in the circus, because I used to be so scared when I first began to have a hand in the tumbling."

"But look here," said the Sergeant, in rather gruff, soldier-like fashion, "if you've a father and he's living, why aren't you living with him 'stead of being away over here among strangers? Ye're not a runaway, are ye, Flutters?"

"Yes, I am," said Flutters, scanning the Sergeant's face closely to watch the effect of his confession. "I had to do it, Sergeant. I was in the way at home. My mother was a colored lady, but she died in India, and then my father took me to England and married a white lady, and there were some white children and I wasn't wanted. They used to say I was such a queer, dark little thing."

"Blest if I blame you, then!" said the Sergeant, whose heart was touched; "but does your father know you're in good, kind hands. I suppose he cared more for you than the rest of 'em did?"

"Yes," said Flutters, "and so I felt I ought to let him know, and I thought perhaps if you didn't mind, you'd hunt him up when you get over there, and tell him 'bout me, and how happy I am, and that I send my love."

"But then he might be sending for you to come back. Have you thought of that, Flutters?"

"Yes, I've thought of it, but it isn't likely, Sergeant. He knows I'm not wanted there; but anyhow, it seems to me I ought to let him know now that I'm so well cared for."

"That's so," said the Sergeant, pausing a moment to give the matter due consideration. "I think you're right about it, and I'll hunt your father up just as soon as I can get my furlough and run down to see my relatives in Cheshire."

"Here's my father's name and address," said Flutters, taking a slip of paper from his pocket, "and when you write to me just

direct 'Flutter,' care of Captain Boniface. I don't want them to know about me up there. I just want them to think of me as an ordinary little darkey, and not above any sort of work."

"That's very good of you," replied Sergeant Bellows, tucking the precious little paper under his blue gingham-covered pillow; "not every boy would be so considerate as to think of that, but then it's a mighty nice berth for you, too. I'd give a good deal myself to live with the Bonifaces."

"But you are glad to go home, aren't you?" Flutter asked, with some surprise.

"No doubt I shall be glad to see old England again, but once I've seen it that's all I care for. It's different with most of the men. Some of them can hardly speak for joy at the thought, and that makes some of the rest of us who haven't any homes to go to very wretched with—well I guess you'll have to call it not-any-home-sickness. It's half what is the matter with me to-day; and Andy there in the next bunk, who lost a wife and baby years ago in England, he'd a sight rather keep his back turned on everything that belongs to it. But there's no help for it. A soldier had best not have any will of his own, nor any preferences either, if he knows what's good for him."

Flutter did not know what reply to make to all this, though feeling very sorry for the old Sergeant, and so he began to button his coat together, and said: "I guess I'd better go now. I hope I haven't made your headache any worse, Sergeant?"

"Never you fear. It's done me good to talk with you, Flutter. It was more of a heartache than a headache, you know. I had one of those blue streaks, when a fellow feels he isn't of any use in the world; but if I can carry a message from you to your father 'way across the great ocean, I must be of a little use still, so I'll turn over and go to sleep as a sensible old codger should," and, suiting the action to the word, Sergeant Bellows rather unceremoniously "turned over" and pulled the gray army blanket half over his head.

"Good-night, then," said Flutter, rising and taking the candle from the shelf.

"Good-night," yawned the Sergeant, as though already half asleep. "I'll be up to the Captain's in the morning."

Flutter set the lighted candle back where he had found it, and

then made his way out as quietly as possible, and the moonbeams and the quiet once more had the room to themselves; and, unless thoughts were too active or hearts too heavy, there was no reason why Andy and the Sergeant should not have dropped off into the soundest of naps, at any rate, until the rest of the men should turn in an hour or two later, when there would, no doubt, be noise enough to wake the best of sleepers.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOME OLD FRIENDS COME TO LIGHT.



It was a comfort to have that matter off his mind, and, whatever might come of it, he had done the right thing. Such were Flutter's thoughts, as with hands plunged deep in his overcoat pockets, he started for home. To be sure, there was no knowing what might happen. What if his father should write to Captain Boniface and tell him that he (Flutter) was a naughty little runaway, and advise him to have nothing more to do with him? or suppose he should direct to have him sent right back to England, what would he do? Why, then, he thought he'd simply run away again, only that would

not be an easy thing to do after having been treated so kindly by the Bonifaces. But, as he had himself told the Sergeant, it was not at all probable that this would happen; and so, like the logical little philosopher he was, he decided to think no more about it, and, if taking the advice of the old hymn, he "gave to the *winds* his fears," it was no time at all before they were blown far behind him. During the half hour that he had spent with the Sergeant, a cold northwest blow had set in, making

it far more comfortable for him to bend his head downward as he ran, and not take the wind full in his face. And this same north-west wind was playing all sorts of pranks with every pliable thing it could get hold of. The bare branches of the trees were swaying and crackling, withered leaves were swirling round in eddies and rustling loudly, gates were creaking on their rusty hinges, and, just as Flutters had reached a point in the road where an old hut stood, the blustering wind caught the only shutter remaining at one of its windows, and slammed it to with a bang that fairly made him jump. Looking toward the hut that had been deserted for years, Flutters saw a faint light shining out through the half of the window that was not screened by the closed shutter.

"That's queer," he thought; "who can be living there?" and then, instead of running on without giving the matter another thought—as some boys, I think, would have done—he walked softly in at the gateway that had long lacked a gate, straight up to the window and peeped in; nor was it mere curiosity that prompted him to do it either. Flutters knew that no one, under ordinary circumstances, would be there; nothing short of utter homelessness would make anybody seek shelter in that wretched place, and so he felt the matter ought to be investigated, and he was not afraid to be the one to do it. And what do you suppose he saw through the broken pane? Something that would have made the tears come into almost anybody's eyes, but something that made Flutters's heart fairly stand still.

The only furniture of the room was a three-legged stool on which a bit of candle was spluttering, fastened to the stool by the melting of its own tallow, and there beside it, on a bundle of straw, lay an old man; and it took but one glance from Flutters's astonished eyes to see that the man was Bobbin, the old circus drudge. In another second he had pushed the door open and was kneeling at his friend's side, and stroking his cold, wrinkled hand.

"Why, who is it?" asked Bobbin, in a cracked, weak voice; "I can't rightly see, somehow, but it's good to know some one has come."

"Why, it's me, Bobbin, don't you know me?" said Flutters, scarcely able to speak with emotion.

A bright smile lighted up the old man's face. "Ah! I thought He'd send somebody. He did send you, didn't He?"

"No, nobody sent me, Bobbin. I was just going by, and I saw the light, and I peeped in and then I saw you."

The old man shook his head, as much as to say that he believed that the good Father had sent him, nevertheless.

"I'm glad you were the one to come," he said, presently; "there's nobody I'd rather have had than you, Flutters. You were always a kind little chap to old Bobbin."

Flutters did not say anything—he couldn't. He just pressed the wrinkled hand a little harder as it lay in his.

"You see, Flutters," said Bobbin, presently, "I think I am going home to-night, and it was kind of lonely not to have somebody to care for me. Not that I mind going. I'm not a bit afraid, Flutters. I have done the best I could with the poor chance I had, and God will forgive the rest; don't you think so, Flutters?"

Flutters nodded his head, and then he said in a moment, when he thought he could control his voice: "But, Bobbin, I do not believe you are going to die. You need food and fire and clothes to warm you, and I am going right off to get them for you."

"Oh, no, please don't," pleaded the old man, putting what little strength he had into his hold on Flutters's hand. "I don't want food nor anything. I just want to go, and it won't be long. Promise me you'll stay till morning, Flutters."

There was no gainsaying the entreaty in Bobbin's voice, and so Flutters said: "I promise you, Bobbin;" and, with a gratified sigh the old man turned on his side and soon fell asleep. After a while, when Flutters dared to move a little, he piled the loose straw that lay about him as closely as possible over Bobbin, and finally decided to dispense with his own warm coat, for the sake of stuffing it in the hole of the little paneless window through which the wind was keenly blowing.

Then, after another hour of motionless watching, during which Bobbin still lay sleeping as quietly as a child, it occurred to Flutters to try and make a fire in the blackened fireplace. Some old bits of board were lying in one corner of the room, and, piling them on the hearth, he easily succeeded in kindling them with a bundle of straw lighted at the candle. At first he was afraid that the crackling of the wood would waken the old man; but, undis-

turbed, he slept quietly on as though his mind was perfectly at rest, now that Flutters had come to care for him.

"I do not believe he is going to die," thought Flutters, after he had again sat motionless for a long time, and then he crept close on hands and knees to look into his face, and to listen if he was breathing quite regularly; and there, bending over him, what did he



"THERE WAS HIS OWN NAME ON THE FLY-LEAF, IN HIS MOTHER'S WRITING."

see but something that made his heart bound for joy, though it was nothing but the corner of a little book showing itself above the ragged edge of one of Bobbin's pockets. And no wonder he was glad, for he knew in a moment that it was his own little Prayer-Book.

At first he thought he ought not to touch it for fear of waking

Bobbin, but how could he help it, and so, as gently as possible, he drew it out from its hiding-place, and crept back to the candle. I suppose we can hardly imagine what the finding of this old friend meant to Flutters. There was his own name on the fly-leaf, in his mother's writing, together with the date of his birth. Here was the proof, if he ever cared to use it, that he had once known a mother's love, and that was a deal more than some of the world's waifs could lay claim to, and besides, he loved the book for its own sake, for the beautiful words and thoughts that were in it. And to think Bobbin had kept it safe for him all these weeks; Flutters began to think that perhaps the Lord had sent him to Bobbin after all. And so he fell to wondering, as many an older head full often wonders, as to how much mere chance has to do with the happenings of this world, and how much the careful guiding of a Heavenly Father; but that the Father above has a great deal to do therewith is no longer a question in the minds of many of us.

Meantime it was growing very late, for the clock on the town-hall was on the verge of striking twelve, and the moon was high over head. But Bobbin still slept on, and Flutters dared not leave him. What would Mrs. Boniface think, and how disappointed she would be to find that he was not to be trusted; but there was his promise to Bobbin, and he could not go, so he did the next best thing, he lay down by his side under the protection of the friendly straw and himself fell asleep, while the red-hot embers in the fire-place glowed and crackled as though anxious to make the place as comfortable as possible.

Bobbin did not die that night; he woke with the first ray of sunlight that reached the hovel, but he found his faithful little watcher awake before him. Flutters thought he looked surprised, and perhaps a little disappointed, to find his eyes opening again in this world; at any rate he sighed a little wearily as he seemed slowly to realize where he was, then he looked up to Flutters's face and said, with a grateful smile, "I knew you would keep your promise. I knew you would not leave me."

"But you will let me go *now*, Bobbin, won't you?" said Flutters, with a world of entreaty in his voice, and wondering what he would do if Bobbin still proved obdurate; "you see I haven't lived so very long with the Bonifaces, and they'll think I've run away, and be

sorry they ever trusted me. I'll make up the fire before I go, and I'll be back soon and bring you something to eat and something perhaps to make you more comfortable."

"Yes," said the old man, after what seemed to Flutters a long pause, "I'll let you go, but not for long, mind that, Flutters; 'cause now that I can't do a thing for myself, I believe the Lord says, 'Flutters, you're to take care of old Bobbin till the time comes for me to take him away and care for him myself.'"

"I believe so, too," answered Flutters, pushing the thin, gray hair back from the old man's forehead, and trying to make him look a little less unkempt and neglected, "and never you fear but I'll do it, Bobbin."

Then in a moment Flutters was gone, fairly flying home along the road, and when he reached the house not stopping so much as to say good-morning to old Dinah, who was opening the kitchen windows, and started back as though she had seen a ghost; but straight past her, and straight up to Captain Boniface's room. Mrs. Boniface slept on a little cot in the corner of the room nearest the door, and Flutters thought, and, as it proved, thought rightly, that he could give a gentle knock, and waken her without disturbing the Captain.

"Who is there?" asked a sweet, low voice, a voice whose every intonation Flutters had grown to love.

"It's only me—Flutters," came the ungrammatical whisper, "but I wanted you to know that I'm home all right. Nothing happened to me, but I came across an old friend of mine, and I had to stop and take care of him."

"Wait a moment, dear," Mrs. Boniface answered, not caring in the least that it was by no means customary to address little mulatto servant-boys in that familiar fashion. Like dear old Janet, in McDonald's beautiful story, Mrs. Boniface was "one of *God's* mothers," with a mother-love broad enough and deep enough to shelter every little creature who, like Flutters, needed and longed for the protection of a brooding wing.

Flutters sat down on the wood-box in the hall and waited, and in a moment Mrs. Boniface in her soft, blue wrapper, was seated beside him and he was outpouring with breathless eagerness the night's experiences, winding up, when all was told, with, "and I promised to go back as soon as ever I could."

And Flutters did go back as soon as he could, and Josephine and Hazel went with him ; and food and clothing, and blankets and towels went too, and a dozen other things, such as any one would know would add greatly to the comfort of a sick old man who had lain down, as he thought, to die, in an empty and wretched dwelling. Later in the day, when some of the nearer neighbors had heard Bobbin's sad story, they were anxious, too, to do something for him, and before nightfall you would hardly have known the poor little shanty. One of them had sent a cot, and Bobbin had been lifted on to it ; another, two or three chairs, one of which was a comfortable old rocker, and a third a table and some necessary cooking utensils. Indeed, Bobbin's story, as he narrated it to the little group gathered around him that morning after Flutters had found him, was sad enough to touch anybody's heart.

"I kept on with the troupe," he told them, "till we got almost to Albany, but I was getting weaker almost every day, and I missed Flutters dreadfully. I never knew till the boy was gone how much hard work he had saved me in one way and another. So at last, and just as I knowed it would be, the manager came to me one day and said, 'We ain't got no use for you any more, Bobbin. Ye can stay behind when we move on to-night.' An' I just looked him the eye an' said: 'All right, sir ; but I'm wondering if you'll not be left behind when the Lord's own troupe moves on to the many mansions.' I knowed I ought not to have spoke like that, but there isn't a harder heart in the world than his, and that's the truth."

"And what did you do then, Bobbin ?" Josephine asked, as she sat beside him with tears of indignation standing in her eyes.

"Why, right away I began to make my way back to Flutters ; somehow I knew I should find him, only when I crawled into this hut last night after three weeks of being on the road, I thought it might not happen in this world."

And so it came about that Bobbin was made perfectly comfortable in the old shanty, for in those days there were no well-ordered Homes and Hospitals, for sick and homeless people, and Flutters, greatly to his heart's delight, was established as attendant-in-chief to his old friend.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOD-BYE, SIR GUY.



LEAR and cool dawned the twenty-fifth of November, and, joy to the heart of every Whig, before nightfall not a member of the King's army would be left on American soil. Never, I ween, had the break of any day in New York found so large a number of its inhabitants awake to greet it. Too excited to sleep, with the thought of going home, were scores of English soldiers, and too excited to sleep, at the thought that they were soon to be rid of them, was well-nigh every loyal Whig throughout the length and breadth of the city. So, at a remarkably

early hour there was an unwonted stir everywhere, and it seemed as though the very horses and cattle in their stalls must have divined that something remarkable was in the wind. But this great day of consum-

mation had not arrived without weeks and months of active preparation. Affairs in New York had been sadly mismanaged, and the arrival of Sir Guy Carleton, in the spring of 1782, had proved a precious boon, alike to Whig and Tory, and during the seventeen months intervening between his arrival and the evacuation,

of the city, on this same twenty-fifth day of November, 1783, Sir Guy had had his hands full. One of the heaviest labors he had had to perform was the transporting of twelve thousand Loyalists from all parts of the colonies, to Nova Scotia, the Bahamas and Great Britain, for New York was not the only place where the offending Tories were made to feel, and very pointedly, too, that their room was considered vastly better than their company.

But finally all was ready, the "Royal Order" to evacuate had arrived some two months before, and as soon as possible Sir Guy had named the day for departure. Now at last the day itself had come, and there was scarce a man, woman or child who had not planned to enter in some way into its festivities. But up at the Boniface's there was a strong conflict of feeling in one little Tory breast. Hazel was naturally in a "perfect state," as girls say nowadays. It was most improper that she, an indignant little Loyalist, should be a witness to all that day's jubilation, and yet Starlight and Flutters and the Marberrys were going over to Bowery Lane to see the American troops march in from Harlem, and then into the city to see the English troops embark from Fort George, and were going to make a fine long day of it, and, after all, what good would it do anybody if she stayed at home? So it happened that Hazel's love of military bands and streamers and all sorts of public demonstration got the better even of her Tory principles, and after much urging on the part of the Marberrys (which she had felt from the first could be relied upon), she yielded, and Mrs. Boniface prepared a luncheon for *five*, instead of "just for four," as Hazel had that morning directed. But none of the little party setting forth looked forward to the day's pleasure with quite so keen a relish as Flutters. He still remained quite neutral, not finding it easy, owing to his peculiar circumstances, to side either with Whig or Tory. So it did not matter much to him who were going or who were coming, the one dominant thought in his boyish heart simply being, that he was off for a day's fun, of which he had not had a great deal lately. For the last week he had been in constant attendance on old Bobbin, and before that there had been such very sad hearts in the Boniface household, owing to the Captain's illness. But for to-day Josephine had volunteered to care for Bobbin, and Bobbin himself had consented to spare Flutters, and so, free in every

sense to give himself up to whatever enjoyment offered, Flutters was ready for "a lark." And in just this very sort of thing, you boys and girls, who are like Flutters, set us older boys and girls an example, for boys and girls we are, all of us, in a way, so long as we keep a vestige of naturalness about us. Real sorrows may weigh down a child's spirit, and real trials beset him, but, give him the chance, even for an hour, to forget the sorrow and the trial, and he forgets it; and when God puts just such opportunities into all our lives, is it not for this very purpose of helping us to forget for a while?

Mrs. Boniface watched the five little friends file down the pathway, Flutters bringing up the rear with the capacious lunch-basket, and was thankful that there were pleasures, even in such unfavorable times, which children might enter into; and then, perhaps with thoughts akin to those we have been writing, about forgetting trouble, she turned with a bright smile to the Captain, and proposed that they should try and have a happy day too, unmindful of what was going on down in the city, and thankful for the serenity of their home, still left unmolested. And so Dinah was directed to prepare a favorite dish of the Captain's, and the Captain's favorite books were brought out, and Mrs. Boniface, resolutely putting aside every household claim, read aloud for two hours at a sitting, and then little Kate came in for a romp and had it, and at one o'clock Dinah brought in luncheon for all three on a great japanned tray, and they had a very cosy time eating it together. Who would have thought, to have looked in upon them, that Evacuation Day was, in point of fact, a very sorry day for the Boniface's?

Meantime the children gained the Bowery Road, mounted a rail fence in a row, like a flock of sparrows, and, with full as much chatter, waited for the coming of the troops.

It seemed strange enough to everybody to think that the entire British Army, which had been scattered broadcast throughout the vicinity for so many years, was now congregated down in the city, and that before many hours there would not be a trace of it left. Hazel had certain apprehensions that it was going to seem very lonely without them, and when a small detachment of English soldiers marched past (the last of a company that had been quartered at Kings Bridge) and cheerily called out, "Good-bye,

Whiggies," to the children, as they sat on the fence, her heart entirely misgave her. Was it really loyal for her to be abroad on a day of such rejoicing, and how insulting to be called a "Whiggie," when she was every whit as strong a Tory as the soldiers themselves. But just then the inspiring strains of an approaching



"GOOD-BYE, WHIGGIES."

band reached her, and the misgivings took to themselves wings. Nearer and nearer came the music, and soon Starlight recognized General Knox in command of two companies of American soldiers. They were marching into the city in compliance with a request of Sir Guy Carleton's, so as to be on hand in case of any disorder

among the Whigs while the English were embarking. Now as soon as these American troops should have gotten out of the way, the Marberrys had planned a little surprise for the rest of the party, which they knew would prove a great addition to the day's pleasure. So, just as the children had begun to scramble down from the fence, with the intention of getting into the city as best they could, up drove old Jake, the Marberrys' coachman, with a farm wagon piled high with straw. "Whoa! whoa, da!" called Jake to the Rector's old black horse, and then, bowing and smiling, he said, importantly, "At your sarvice for Evacuation Day, chilluns."

Of course Hazel and Starlight and Flutters were delighted at this undreamed-of luxury, of being driven about all day, from one point of interest to another, and before they climbed into the wagon Hazel gave vent to her appreciation by giving both Milly and Tilly such a hug as sent the color flushing gratefully into the cheeks of those amiable little sisters.

For once in his life old Jake was in a thoroughly good humor, but it is extremely doubtful if anything short of all the pleasurable sensations of Evacuation Day could have brought about that delightful state of affairs. As for the children they were quite ready to do anything in the world for Jake, out of sheer gratitude for his kindly mood, a state of affairs, by the way, which should have made that old party feel very much ashamed of himself. To think that it should be such an unusual thing for a man to be kind, as to make even children open their eyes for wonder.

It is impossible fully to describe all the varied enjoyment that that day held for the little party, although from the nature of things it was hardly to be expected that Hazel was able to get as much pleasure out of it as the others. Down into the city they went in the wake of General Knox's men, who came to a halt at the Collect, and then passing them, Jake took his stand at a point near Fort George, from which the children could watch the English soldiers file down into the barges and push off for the vessels lying at anchor in the Bay.

"There comes Company F," Starlight at last exclaimed, and in a moment the children tumbled out of the wagon, much to old Jake's astonishment, and in another moment were crowding round Sergeant Bellows, as he stood waiting his turn to step into the boat.

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The Sergeant had been up to the Boniface's for a more formal leave-taking the day before, but the children had promised to be on hand at the moment of departure, if they could in any wise manage it, and the Sergeant's face showed his delight, when he spied them come bounding toward him.

There were tears in Hazel's eyes as the boat veered off from the dock, and tears in the Marberrys' eyes out of sympathy for Hazel, but of course the boys pretended they saw nothing whatever to feel sorry about. In the excitement, however, Flutters called out in a very significant tone, "Don't you forget, Sergeant," and the Sergeant replied in rather a husky voice, "Never you fear, my boy!"

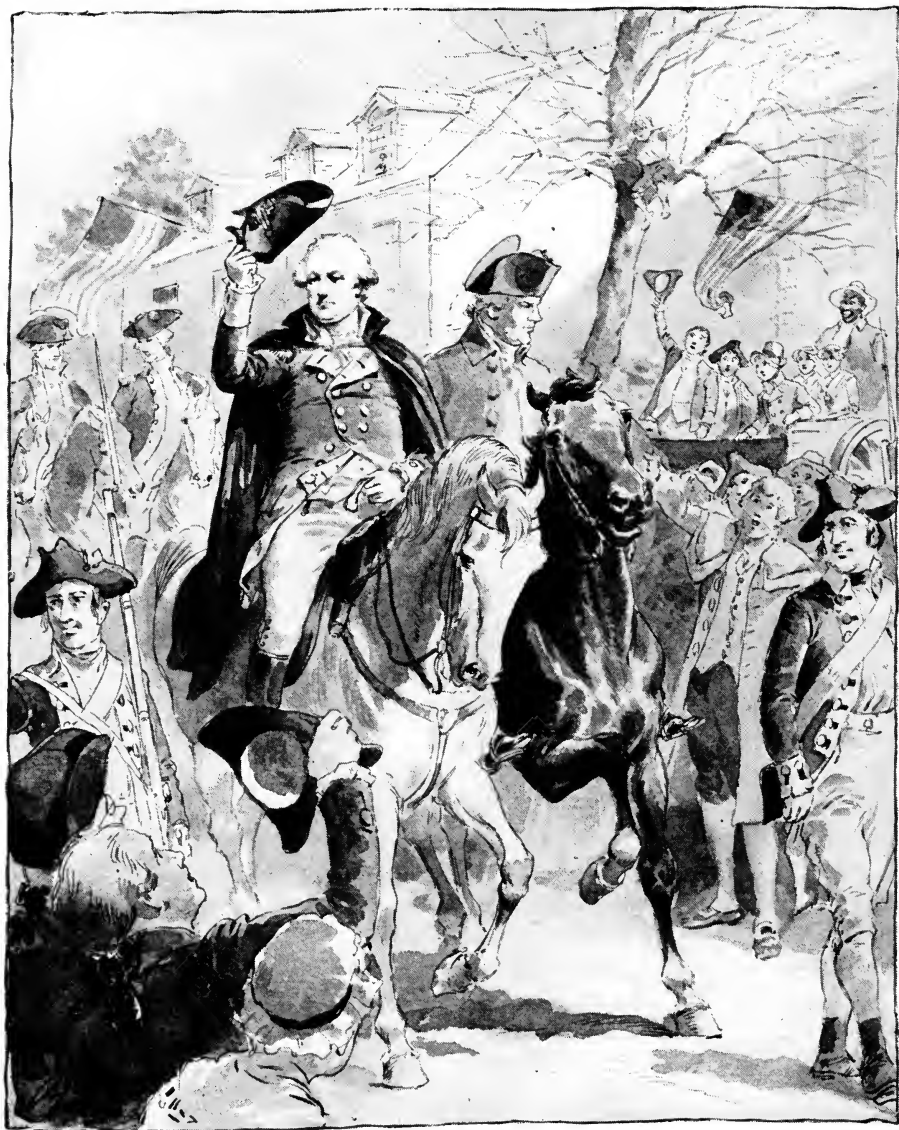
"Forget what?" questioned Hazel, feeling somehow that a little body-servant ought scarcely to have any private matters on hand. And then Flutters, realizing how foolish he had been to make public his affairs in that fashion, felt constrained to answer, "Oh, nothing," to Hazel's question, which disrespect on his part offended the dignity of his little mistress, and caused her to treat him with much coolness for the space of the next two minutes, at the end of which, however, she resumed her wonted manner, having forgotten by that time any reason for acting otherwise.

Company F had come about mid-way in the order of embarking, and as it neared one o'clock, the extreme rear guard began to file into the barges, while the American troops moved silently forward and took possession of the Fort, and then it was that General Knox, with a chosen few, galloped back to meet and escort General Washington and Governor Clinton into the city. For old Jake's party this in-between time seemed to offer the most favorable opportunity for luncheon, and with appetites keenly whetted by their long morning in the open air, the children "fell to," and as soon as Jake had tied a bag of oats over black Jennie's head, he took his seat at the back of the wagon, and was himself regaled with a much larger portion of the Boniface luncheon than he in any wise deserved. If a body chances to be very hungry, and at the same time so fortunate as to have the wherewithal to satisfy that hunger, it is astonishing how absorbing the process of eating may become, and so I doubt if, for a while, the thoughts of the little company in the Rector's wagon, rose above the level of the biscuits they were enjoying or were otherwise occupied than with the great acceptableness of cook-

ies, apple jelly, and some other inviting edibles; and yet, only think! this was the 25th of November, 1783. Out there beyond them on the broad sunshine of the Bay, the last of the English Army were turning their backs upon America, and above them toward Harlem, a large company of loyal Americans were joyfully forming into rank and file to take public possession of the city so dearly loved, and that had been for years under English rule. Yes, American history was making very fast during that eventful November noontide, and yet so imperative are the demands of poor human nature, that even such a thorough-going little Whig as Starlight became for the time being so deeply absorbed in bread and cheese as to grow unmindful of exultant Whigs and departing Tories.

But after the luncheon was all disposed of, save a few crumbs thrown over the wagon side to a stray dog, who had long been beseechingly eying the children, their minds at once reverted to matters of general importance, and it was decided to drive back to some point on Broadway from which they could watch the procession, and Jennie was urged into a clumsy canter by way of making up for lost time. As it was they had some difficulty in gaining even a fair position on the line of march, and secured that none too soon, for the sound of music in the distance was growing more and more distinct, and in another second the head of the procession came into view. And what a procession it proved! although there was no show of military pomp or glory. That was quite impossible, since the greater part of the American Army had already been disbanded, and those that were left to participate in the day's jubilation owned nothing better than shabby uniforms which had seen hard service, and in many cases even these poor remnants had need to be supplemented with coats or trousers of most unmilitary aspect. But, notwithstanding all this, it was a grand procession. General Washington and Governor Clinton on horseback, followed by their suites, were at its head; then came the Lieutenant Governor and the members of the Legislature; following them, the officers of the army, and a large body of prominent citizens, and lastly the military, whose very shabbiness, because of its significance, served but to add to the interest they excited.

The sun was setting behind the New Jersey hills before the procession was truly over, and then, as there was nothing more to



"GENERAL WASHINGTON AND GOVERNOR CLINTON HEADED THE PROCESSION."

be seen, and they were thoroughly weary besides, the children assented to Jake's proposition to turn Jennie's head homeward. When they neared the vicinity of old Bobbin's shanty, Flutters crept to the back of the wagon prepared to drop at the right moment.

"Where's Flutters going?" asked the Marberrys.

"Oh, he has to take care of old Bobbin, now," Hazel explained with a sigh; "but you can't imagine how inconvenient it is for me," for her ladyship had taken very kindly to this having a willing little servant at her beck and call. Rather too kindly, Mrs. Boniface thought, and she was not sorry to have Flutters's time so fully occupied as to leave none of it at Hazel's disposal. Soon after Flutters's departure the little party relaxed into silence, talked out and tired out, and as Jake showed some signs, now that the excitement of the day was over, of resuming his wonted surliness, Starlight and Hazel were not the least sorry when old Jennie, in the perfect stillness of the early November twilight, came to a standstill at the Boniface gate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FLUTTERS LOSES ONE OF THE OLD
FRIENDS.



JOSEPHINE had stood in the doorway of the little cottage half a dozen times within the last hour peering anxiously down the road in search of Flutters, and now that she discovered him coming cross-cut through the meadow near which he had left the wagon, no one could have told how relieved she felt.

"Oh, Flutters, I'm so glad you've come!" she called softly, as soon as he came within speaking distance, and then immediately turned back into the room. Flutters followed

her on tip-toe, for she had motioned him to come in quietly. "What is the matter?" he asked, going close to Bobbin's cot.

"Oh, I don't know," Josephine whispered, with tears of anxious sympathy filling her gray eyes; "we had had a lovely talk together, and then he asked me to read out of a book, your Prayer-Book, he said it was, and so I read ever so many psalms from the Psalter, till suddenly looking up I saw that he was in great pain, and when I spoke to him he seemed neither to see nor hear me. In a little while the pain passed over, and ever since he has lain there so still that I have had to put my ear down very close to make sure that he was breathing."

"Dear old Bobbin," said Flutters, stroking the thin gray hair. The well-known voice, or perhaps the gentle touch, seemed to rouse him, for he slowly opened his eyes and seeing Flutters, smiled.

"You'll not try to keep me this time," he said slowly, looking up at Flutters beseechingly, but in a voice too low and weak for even Josephine to hear.

"He said not to try to keep him this time," Flutters explained, "but don't you think I ought to go right away for a doctor?"

Bobbin moved his head entreatingly from side to side, so Josephine said: "Well, perhaps not yet, Flutters, he seems so much more comfortable now," whereupon Bobbin looked the thanks he felt. After a while, when he had once again mustered strength, he said: "Flutters, the little book."

Flutters, knowing well enough what he meant, took the Prayer-Book which had been soon restored to Bobbin after that night when he had first joyfully discovered it, and turning to the selections for the twenty-fifth day of the month began to read. Josephine drew a chair to the fireplace and sat listening, with her hands folded in her lap, while Bobbin never took his eyes from Flutters's face, as he sat close beside him so that he might hear distinctly.

The little hut looked very cheery and cosey, converted as it had been into such a comfortable shelter, more comfortable indeed than Bobbin had ever known, and at a time, too, when a warm room and a quiet one meant more to him than it could have meant at any time in all his life before. But the light in the room was momentarily growing more and more dim, and Flutters had to hold the book high in his hand toward the little window in order to see at all. Gradually Bobbin's tired eyes closed, and the last words that fell on his ears were these: "My soul has longed for Thy salvation and I have a good hope because of Thy Word. Mine eyes long sore for Thy Word, saying, Oh, when wilt Thou comfort me?" Flutters finished the selection and looked up. "Miss Josephine!" was all he found words to say, but both of them knew in a moment that in very truth "Evacuation Day" had come for Bobbin too, evacuation from all the sorrows of a long, hard life.

"I am not sorry," said Josephine, looking down on the calm face from which all the care seemed at once to have vanished.

"Nor I," said Flutters, "but he was such a good friend to me

when no one else cared," and then, unable to keep the tears back, he laid his arm on Bobbin's bed, and burying his face upon it, cried bitterly.

There was something sacred about this deep sense of personal loss that was finding vent in Flutter's hot tears, and for a while Josephine hesitated to intrude upon it. She moved quietly about the room setting its few little articles to rights, and then when there was nothing else to be done, and Flutter had gotten himself somewhat in hand, she sat down by his side.

"What do you know about Bobbin's history, Flutter?" she asked.

"Not much," trying to master the emotion that made it difficult to speak; "he never liked to talk about himself, but he told me once he had always been sort of alone ever since he could remember, and that he hadn't a relative in the world."

Two days afterward, Bobbin was laid away in a corner of the little cemetery surrounding St. George's Church, Mr. Marberry having gained the consent of the Vestry to have him buried there. Mr. Marberry read the service from Flutter's own Prayer-Book, and about the grave of the old man whose life had been so lonely, gathered at the last a little company of loving friends. It seemed to Flutter as if, with Bobbin's death, the chapter of his life that had to do with the wretched circus had been forever closed, but, oh, how thankful he was to have been able to make so calm and peaceful the last days of the only friend it had ever given him. Once again the road-side cottage was dismantled of everything that made it homelike, and as the bleak wintry winds whistled round and through it, who would have thought that such a little while ago an old man had been comfortably housed there, and that it was only now left tenantless, because its occupant no longer had need of any earthly shelter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TWO IMPORTANT LETTERS.



EVACUATION DAY, with all its excitement, was soon followed by that day well-nigh as eventful, when on the Fourth of December General Washington took final leave of his officers "in the great historic room" at Fraunces Tavern, a leave-taking that proved a very touching and trying ordeal both for him and for them.

Starlight and Flutters, who had contrived to be in the forefront of the crowd that looked on, could have told you how plainly strong emotion was betrayed on the brave General's face, as he passed out from the tavern, and down to the barge that was waiting to convey him to Paulus Hook on his way to Congress.

But after that day, affairs settled down into much quieter channels than they had known for some time—that is, at any rate as far as the people with whom we have most to do are concerned. The Van Vleets had asked Aunt Frances to make her home with them indefinitely, and though still faintly cherishing the hope that

she might have her own home back again some day, she had accepted their invitation, and opened a little school among the farmers' children in the neighborhood. Starlight was one of her most promising pupils, and so his visits to Kings Bridge were of necessity less frequent than they used to be. In that matter, Cousin Harry had a great advantage over him, for having moved to New York in order to be near his office, what more natural, and, as Harry would have said, "what more delightful," than to spend all his evenings at the Bonifaces? And what a blessing those visits were to them, only they themselves could have told you. As soon as he arrived he would first go upstairs and have a talk with the Captain, ransacking his mind for everything that could by any possibility interest him; then when he had told the little or much that he had to tell, or saw that he was tiring him, down he would go to the sitting-room, have a romp with Bonny Kate, if she had managed to stay up past her bed-time, or possibly a game of some sort with Hazel and Flutters, but it generally happened that after a while there was no one left to talk to save Josephine, and of course you know better than to think that Harry minded that. Josephine had generally some bit of work in hand, and could not afford to simply laugh and chat the evening away, with her pretty hands lying idle in her lap, as perhaps is the case with your older sister, when some friend comes to call. No, indeed! it was necessary in those days for her to stitch, and stitch industriously in every available moment, if the Boniface needs were to be in any wise met; nor did these two young people laugh and chat very much either—the times were rather too serious for that; not that they did not have a happy time of it, and sometimes were actually merry, but, as a rule, they seemed to have something of importance to quietly talk over.

Meantime the winter came and went, and spring began to be felt in the air, and an occasional early bird note, or a bunch of pussy willow by the road-side, bore witness to the fact that it was slowly but surely coming.

It had seemed a long, long winter to Mrs. Boniface. For many weeks she had lived the most retired life possible. Few had come to see her, and there were but one or two friends left whom she cared to go and see. If it had not been for Harry Avery, they would scarce have had any communication with the outside world.

There had been no further threats made against Captain Boniface. Even the most bitter of his enemies would hardly have found it in his heart to persecute a man who was so hopelessly paralyzed as never to be able to walk again ; but there was something very significant in the fact that they simply left him alone. None of them in a relenting spirit had called to inquire how he was, and if any of the old friends, who had treated him so cruelly that night at the Assembly, ever felt ashamed of their behavior, they never had the grace to own it. Indeed, it is terrible to think how that great mastering passion, which we proudly call patriotism, sometimes seems to smother every noble and natural impulse.

Soon after the Assembly, in fact that very night, Captain Boniface had told his wife of the murders in South Carolina, and it seemed to her then as though every spark of sympathy with the colonies and colonial interests had that moment died within her. She was by far too noble to let actual hatred take its place ; but she longed with all her heart for old England, where she had been born, and to turn her back on this new country which had treated her so harshly. So Mrs. Boniface waited, with no little anxiety, for the arrival of the long-looked-for letter, cherishing the fervent hope that her father would send for them all to come to him, planning thoughtfully all the details of their journey, and yet never once daring to put her hope into words. It might happen that, although willing enough to help them, he would not propose to do it by having her little family sweep down upon him and rob the old rectory of the quiet it had known so long, and which must be very grateful to him in his old age. But at last the letter came, and Mrs. Boniface straightway carried it off to Flutter's room, and closed the door and locked it. Her hands trembled as she broke the seal. What were they to do ? that was the question that had anxiously confronted her for several long, weary months ; but always she had simply to postpone any attempt to answer it, waiting for this letter ; and now it was in her hand what would it tell her ?

It proved to be a long, long letter, and she read it slowly through, word by word ; then she buried her face in her hands and cried ; but sometimes people cry for joy and not for sorrow.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, Flutter was grooming

Gladys in the barn, accompanying the process with a queer, buzzing noise, such as I believe is quite common to grooming the world over.

"Flutters, where are you?" called Hazel, coming into the barn in search of him.

"Here with Gladys, Miss Hazel."

"What do you think, Flutters?" and then Hazel climbed up and seated herself on the edge of Gladys's trough, before adding:

"We are going to England to live with grandpa. Mother says he's just the dearest old man, and he's sent for us all to come. He lives in a lovely rectory in Cheshire."

"You don't mean it, Miss Hazel!" said Flutters, his breath quite taken away.

"And of course you will go with me, Flutters. Mother says you may."

"It's very kind of you to be willing to take me," Flutters managed to reply, but at the same time realized that he would do almost anything rather than go back to England, and to the very same county, too, from which he had come; and he leaned down, apparently to brush some straw from one of Gladys's legs, but really to hide the tears of bitter disappointment that had sprung unbidden into his eyes. Fortunately, the ruse succeeded very well, Hazel never dreaming but what he was as delighted with the news as she herself.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to go, Flutters, although mother says we probably never should have gone, if it had not been for father's illness. Things are getting so much quieter now that she thinks people would have let us alone, and father could, perhaps, have found some way to make a living, because, you see, we haven't much money left since the war; but you knew that, Flutters?"

Flutters sort of half nodded yes, seeing that something was expected of him, but he was not paying close attention to what Hazel was saying. How could he bear to have them go and leave him alone in America, and whatever should he do? were the thoughts that were filling his mind. It seemed as though every hair on Gladys's back was bristling with the same sad questions, and then the thought came to him that Gladys herself would prob-

ably he left behind, too, and he laid his hand affectionately on her prettily arched neck.

"I shall be glad to live in a King's country," Hazel resumed,



"WE ARE GOING TO ENGLAND TO LIVE WITH GRANDPA."

after a little pause, "and not where everybody's as good as everybody else, and where they don't have princes and princesses, and lovely palaces for them to live in. But there's one thing I mean to

do as soon as ever I reach there, and that is, to get presented at Court, and tell King George how the prisoners were treated on the 'Jersey.' He ought to know about it, and when he does, I just guess those men will get the punishment they deserve;" and her cheeks glowed with excitement at the thought of the forthcoming interview. "Flutters, do you know anything about the South of England—about Cheshire?"

"Yes, something," answered Flutters, getting a little better command of himself. "In what part of it does your grandfather live?"

"Feltstone, I think."

Flutters gave a sigh of relief. Feltstone was several miles from Burnham, his old home, but it wasn't worth while to think of that; for back to England he would not go. To be sure, there was a chance that if Sergeant Bellows had found his father that he might be sent for; but he could not bear to face that alternative, and would not till he had to. And then, wondering if he ever would hear from the Sergeant, he remembered that he had half-hoped and half-feared that the "Blue Bird," which had brought Mrs. Boniface's letter, would also bring one for him.

As was to be expected, Hazel chatted on with much volubility about the numerous arrangements for the coming journey, and how they would all have to try to make everything as comfortable as possible for her father. Now and then she felt conscious of a lack of enthusiasm on Flutters's part, but the thought was only momentary, and her active little mind at once travelled off in some new line of delightful anticipation. All Flutters had to do was occasionally to answer a question. He thought best not to say anything to Hazel about not going with them until he should have talked with Mrs. Boniface. Meantime Gladys's grooming was completed, and as her pretty mane had been plaited by Hazel, as she talked, into half a dozen tight braids, she looked quite as prim and trig as a little old maid on a Sunday.

"Let's go up to the house, now," said Hazel; "or, no, I'll tell you, let's go up to the Marberrys and tell them."

"I can't go, Miss Hazel; your mother said she had something for me to do in the house." Whereupon Hazel pouted a little, thinking it more fitting, no doubt, that body-servants should obey their mistresses rather than their mistresses' mothers, but at the

same time seeing that it was useless for her to contend against the force of circumstances, which in those days of much to do and few to do it, made Flutters a most useful member of the household.

"There are the Marberrys, now," she cried, discovering them coming in at the gate in their usual two-abreast fashion.

"Flutters," cried Milly, as they both broke into a little run, "here's a letter for you; it came up with our mail by mistake." Flutters reached for it eagerly.

"It's directed just 'Flutters,' care of Captain Boniface," ventured Tilly; "that's queer, isn't it? Haven't you any other name, Flutters?"

"Not now," was Flutters's rather remarkable answer, and then he ran back to the barn as if he had forgotten something important, but really, because, like Mrs. Boniface, he did not want to have any one "round" when he read his letter. He chose, too, to take his seat just where Hazel had been sitting, before he opened it. Gladys looked on with wide-eyed pony astonishment at this unwonted appropriation of her own individual stall, but seemed, notwithstanding, to regard the matter good-naturedly.

If it were feasible to have schools for ponies, and Gladys had had the benefit thereof, and at the same time no better manners than to have looked over Flutters's shoulder, this is what she might have read "just as easy as anything," as you children say:

THE BUNCH OF GRAPES,

BURNHAM, CHESHIRE, ENGLAND,

February 23d, 1784.

MY DEAR FLUTTERS: As perceived by the heading of this letter, I write from the inn in your father's village, to which place I made haste to journey so soon as I was favored with my furlough. And now, my dear Flutters, I have sad news to break to you, and for which you must nerve yourself, like the plucky little fellow that you are. Your good father is no longer a sojourner in this sad world of ours. He died after a very short illness, on the third of last September. I went to see his widow, told her I had some knowledge of you, and that if your father had left any message I would send it to you. She said she could not remember any, save that he used sometimes to say that he would like to know if you

were well cared for. She does not seem to have as much heart as most women, and blest if I blame you much for running off as you did. I think your father left very little money, as folks say that your stepmother will have to do something to support herself and her children. Wishing I had better news to send you, Flutters, and with my dutiful respects to the dear Bonifaces, I close this letter—the longest I ever wrote in my life—and I hope never again to be obliged to write such another.

Yours dutifully,

R. A. BELLOWS.

“Oh, Gladys,” cried Flutters, when he had finished reading, and, leaning his head against the pony’s head, he sobbed aloud. Such a whirl of emotion as that letter awoke for Flutters could not be put into words, and in his imagination he seemed to see his father’s grave and old Bobbin’s side by side. The Bonifaces were all he had left now, and they, they were going to leave him; but, no, and a new light seemed to flash in on his mind—what was there now to hinder his going with them? His stepmother would never claim him. Indeed, she need never know he was in England, and so there was a bright side to Flutters’s sorrow, and after a while he walked quietly out from the barn with the Sergeant’s letter in his hand, and straight to Mrs. Boniface, whom he found in the Captain’s room, and then and there he told them all his story, and after the telling felt he was even nearer and dearer to his new friends than ever he had been before.

Only Gladys ever knew how intense had been Flutters’s first sorrow on reading the Sergeant’s letter, but she was such a harum-scarum pony that probably the memory of it went out of her head full as quickly as the hairs, wet by Flutters’s tears, dried on her forehead.

CHAPTER XXV.

A HAPPY DAY FOR AUNT FRANCES.

GOOD news or sorrowful news does not always come to one in the form of a carefully worded letter, as with Mrs. Boniface and Flutters, nor when, because a letter of some sort is expected, one is in a way prepared for it. More often it comes when you are least on the lookout for it, and when life is running on uneventfully in worn grooves, as though it must

so run on forever. And in this same unanticipated fashion

some very good news came to Aunt Frances.

It was just at sunset, and she was out on the river in a little



boat with Starlight. It had been one of those days that sometimes come in the latter part of May as harbingers of summer. The school-room had been close and warm, and Aunt Frances had left it with a headache, so that Starlight, with a loving thoughtfulness that always went straight to her heart, had proposed a row in the cool, early-evening air of the river, and Aunt Frances had accepted.

"Do not row hard, dear," she said; "just paddle around leisurely not far from the shore. I like it just as well;" and Starlight, who also felt a little enervated by the languid day, was glad to take her at her word. Indeed, none of the people of this little story were feeling very bright and cheery just then. 'Rather heavy-hearted,' would have described them all in greater or less degree, and the fact that the Bonifaces were going away had much to do therewith. Even Hazel's rosy anticipations of life under Old England's glorious monarchy, paled a little, as she realized that such dear friends as Aunt Frances, Starlight, and the Marberrys must be left behind, as well as everything else familiar to her childhood. It had been decided that the Bonifaces should sail in the "Blue Bird," when she returned to England in the middle of June, and the sight of her, as she lay at anchor in the harbor, was such a depressing one to Starlight, that he contrived, as they rowed about on the river, to keep his back turned toward her as much as possible.

"Then it is really settled, Starlight, that the Bonifaces are going?" said Aunt Frances, looking over toward the ship, and breaking a long pause, during which they had both sat thoughtfully silent.

"Yes," Starlight answered resting on his oars. "I feel awfully sorry for them."

"But they are not sorry for themselves, are they?" and Aunt Frances drawing up her sleeve put her hand over the boat's side that the cool water might splash against it. "I imagined that Mrs. Boniface was glad to go back to England and to her father, whom she has not seen since she was married, twenty-five years ago."

"Oh, yes, of course, she is glad on some accounts, but after all they go because they must; and, besides, it's hard to go back to the country you came from without having made a success of things."

"But the war is entirely responsible for all the Captain's troubles—everybody knows that well enough, and if any one deserves a pen-

sion from the Crown he certainly does. He has sacrificed health and friends and property in the service of the King."

"That's so," said Starlight, "and it's a cruel shame that people like the Bonifaces shouldn't be treated decently, and that people like us, Aunt Frances, shouldn't be allowed to live in the houses that belong to us."

"Sh—, Starlight," said Aunt Frances, "there are some things you know that it is better not to talk about any more; it only stirs us up and to no purpose;" whereupon Starlight obediently lapsed into silence, and nothing more was said till Aunt Frances, discovering a row-boat in the middle of the river, coming toward them, exclaimed, "Who's that, I wonder!" for boats were not so numerous in those days as to come and go without notice. Starlight wondered too, but continued to row about in an aimless fashion, till first thing they knew the approaching boat was quite close upon them.

"Who can it be?" said Aunt Frances, softly, and Starlight had only time to reply, "It looks a little like Captain Wadsworth," and Aunt Frances to see that he was right in his conjecture, before the boat came within speaking distance, and the Captain, touching his hat, said politely, "Miss Avery, I believe."

"Yes, Captain Wadsworth;" for although Aunt Frances and the Captain had never before exchanged words, their faces were well known to each other. "Did you wish to see me?" she added, somewhat coldly.

The Captain was too much of a gentleman to show that he noticed her chilling manner, and remarked quite casually, "I merely came over to tell you that I have decided after all to give up the idea of making my home in this country, and that your home is at your disposal."

"What do you mean?" said Aunt Frances, unable to believe that she heard aright. As for Starlight, he lost an oar overboard from sheer excitement, which the man who was rowing Captain Wadsworth was kind enough to fish out for him.

"I mean," said the Captain, "that you are free to enter your own home at once; I propose to sail for England very soon and have already vacated it."

"I do not understand you," for Aunt Frances was more confused than she had ever been in her life. "I can pay nothing for it. If

you consider that you have a right to live in it, you must consider that you also have a right to sell it."

The Captain bit his lip, at a loss what to say, and Aunt Frances realized that she was acting unkindly and perhaps rudely.

"Do you mean," she asked, "that there is nothing for me to do but simply to walk into my old home?" and her face brightened unconsciously as she spoke.

"That is exactly what I mean, Miss Avery."

"You are very kind, Captain Wadsworth. You can hardly wonder, I am sure, that I cannot find words in which to thank you."

"Why should you thank me?" the Colonel replied half mischievously. "You have felt all along that the place rightfully belonged to you."

"But you had the law on your side, so what did it matter how I thought or felt?"

"It mattered a great deal, Miss Avery; so much that, law on my side or no, I confess to you that I have not felt very comfortable in your home, particularly since I moved my men out, and have had the place to myself. Indeed, I've never really felt at home in the country, and half regret having resigned my commission."

"You can imagine that all this is a great surprise to me," said Aunt Frances, never looking handsomer in her life, "though I acknowledge having cherished just a faint little hope lately that it might come about some day."

"Why lately, if I may ask, Miss Avery?"

"Because," said Aunt Frances, blushing a little, "Colonel Hamilton told me at the Assembly that he was sorry to have been the means of depriving me of my home, and that he would endeavor to make any reparation within his power. Will you think me rude in asking if he has in any way influenced your decision?"

"Colonel Hamilton? No, not in the least; but I believe the arguments of a certain little woman, who came to me several months ago, have had much to do with it."

"I know who it was," exclaimed Starlight, eagerly, unable to keep silent another moment; "I believe it was Hazel Boniface."

"And I believe you are her friend, 'Starlight,'" said the Captain, having made up his mind to that fact much earlier in the conversation.

Starlight said "Yes, sir," with a beaming look which plainly declared that he was proud to have that honor.

All this while Peter, the Captain's man, had sat an interested listener, enjoying everything with much the same relish perhaps as you or I would enjoy the happy ending of a rather harrowing play, only this was by so much the better, because it was real and not "make believe." To keep the boats from drifting apart, Peter kept a firm hand upon the rail of Starlight's boat, and Starlight's upon his. Indeed, I think there was a tacit understanding between them that on no account were those two boats to be allowed to diverge a hair's-breadth until this whole delightful matter should be unalterably settled.

Of course Starlight's remark about Hazel had been another surprise to Aunt Frances, and when Captain Wadsworth went on to tell her all about Hazel's call in the warm September weather of the preceding autumn, and how deep a hold her childish earnestness had taken upon him, it seemed to Aunt Frances as though she could not wait to give her successful little champion such a hug as she had never had in her life before.

"She went to see Colonel Hamilton too," said Starlight in the pause that followed Captain Wadsworth's narration.

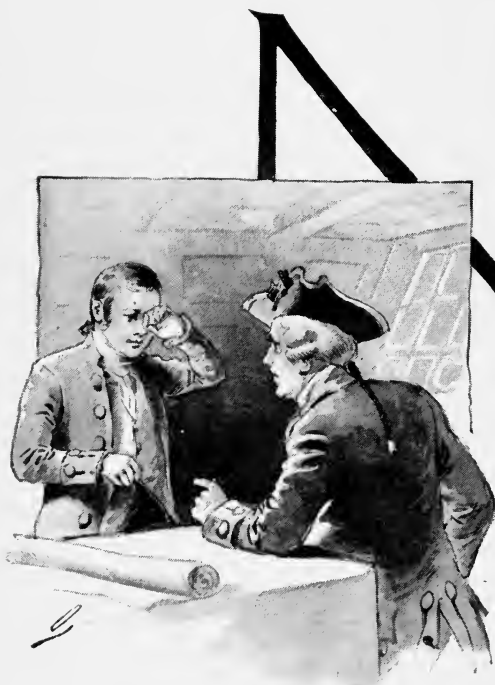
"Then perhaps that partly accounts for Colonel Hamilton's kind feeling," said Aunt Frances slowly, as a new light seemed to shine in upon the whole transaction.

"I think it highly probable, Miss Avery. The old prophecy that a little child shall lead them is more often fulfilled, even in this world, I think, than most of us have any idea of."

Meantime the current of the river had carried the boats close into shore, and Aunt Frances, with the charm of manner that was always natural to her, asked the Captain to come up to the house, and he came up, and accepted the Van Vleets' cordial invitation to stay to supper, and not until the moon was high over the river did he call to Peter to row him back to New York; and if the Colonel's body had grown as light as his heart, old Peter's load would have been scarce heavier than a feather.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE "BLUE BIRD" WEIGHS ANCHOR.



O, Starlight, I'm sorry, but I do not see how you can possibly be of the least use in the world."

Captain Lewis tried to speak kindly, but, big boy or no, real tears stood in Starlight's eyes. "Why, do you feel as badly as that, Starlight?"

Starlight gave a nod which meant that he did feel just as badly as that, and at the same time succeeded in choking down what he feared might have proved an audible little sob.

"Well, then, let me see," and the Captain leaned forward on his rude desk and thought a moment. They were in the cabin of the "Blue Bird," whither Starlight had

rowed over that morning, with such a favor to ask of the "Blue Bird's" Captain as he never yet had asked of anybody.

"And yet you *could* do little odds and ends for me now, couldn't you?" continued the Captain, after what seemed to Starlight a never-ending pause.

"Yes, sir," he answered frankly, brushing away his tears with his sleeve in awkward boy fashion; "I'm sure I could save you ever so many steps. You know I wouldn't think of going unless I really felt I could work my passage."

"You are a proud little fellow, Job, but, then, I like your spirit, and if you won't take the voyage as a cabin passenger at my invitation, why, then, you shall go as you propose. Of course your Aunt has given her consent."

"I have not asked her yet, sir. I thought it would be half the battle to have your permission first."

The Captain laughed heartily over Starlight's diplomacy, and then they talked on for a quarter of an hour longer, arranging the details of the journey that was to be, if only Aunt Frances could be persuaded to give her consent—a pretty big if, by the way. At the end of that time Starlight, remembering that the Captain must have many things to attend to, said good-afternoon, shaking his rough sailor hand with a world of gratitude in his happy face. Then he clambered nimbly down the "Blue Bird's" ladder, and jumping into his boat, rowed off toward New York and toward home, for, scarcely able to believe their senses, Aunt Frances and Starlight were back in the old house, with everything so nearly restored to what it had been before that those two years in the Van Vleet homestead already seemed half a dream.

And now the 15th of June had dawned, and as the "Blue Bird" was to sail that afternoon, everything was in readiness for the departure of the Bonifaces, and everything was in readiness for something else, too, which was nothing more nor less than a wedding at Aunt Frances's. And who do you suppose were going to be married? Who, to be sure, but Josephine and Harry, and Josephine was to stay in America, and her home was to be right there in the old house with Aunt Frances. Strange, wasn't it, that she should be willing to stay behind, when all the family were going away across the ocean to live in England? But that is one of the things that is often happening in this queer world of ours, and the beauty of it is that it is all right and beautiful, and just as the good Father Himself would have it. And so Josephine was married at noon in Aunt Frances's parlor, and even her father was there, for it had been arranged that the ceremony should be performed when the Boni-

faces were on their way to the "Blue Bird," and when it would be an easy matter simply to carry the Captain in and lift him on to the broad lounge in the sitting-room.

There was something sad in the fact that, so strong was party feeling everywhere, that it had been difficult to find in the neighborhood the four men needed to accomplish the moving of Captain Boniface into the city and then out to the ship; four men, that is, who did not feel that they had some sort of grudge against the English officer. But Jake, the Marberrys' man, had at last pressed into the service three others of his race, who bore Captain Boniface no ill-will. It was touching to see with what tender care the four strong fellows lifted their helpless burden, for although the Captain had recovered, as Dr. Melville said he would, partial use of his arms and hands, he was still powerless to take a single step.

Mr. Marberry naturally officiated at the wedding, and the twins, of course, were there, smiling and sweet, though possibly a little self-conscious, in their new white dresses, with soft silk sashes, tied in two exactly similar bows in the middle of their straight little backs. And the Van Vleets were there, and Miss Pauline, who looked rather mystified at the whole proceeding, and Captain Wadsworth besides, and Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton, the two latter of whom were invited because of Harry's position in the Colonel's office.

It was doubtless a real satisfaction to Captain Wadsworth and Colonel Hamilton to be present, though, when you come to think of it, it was rather a remarkable state of things.

Here they were attending a wedding in the very house that they had lawfully succeeded in wresting from Miss Avery, and here she was permanently established in her own home again, with the Captain out of it, and of his own accord too. It was strange indeed how it had all come about, and stranger still to think that a little girl of ten, mustering up sufficient courage to call upon two strange gentlemen several months before, had had much to do with bringing about this delightful change in affairs; but, as we all hear so often that we do not half take in the blessed truth of it, "God's ways are not as our ways," and the trifles, as we think them, are likely to prove anything but trifles.

It was more than a delight to Harry to have Colonel Hamilton present at his wedding, for although his employer was his senior by

only a few years, Harry looked up to him with an admiring veneration amounting almost to worship. There was something about Alexander Hamilton that inspired this sort of devotion, an air,



"THE LOVINGEST SORT OF A KISS."

some have said, of serious, half-sad thoughtfulness, as though the cruel and unnecessary sacrifice of his life, which he felt in honor bound to make in 1804, cast long shadows of presentiment before it.

When the ceremony was over, and Hazel had been the first to press the lovingest sort of a kiss on Josephine's lips, all the rest gathered around to congratulate the young couple, trying for the moment to forget the sorrowful parting so soon to follow. Then when they had eaten, or pretended to eat, some of the good things Aunt Frances had prepared in honor of the occasion, it was time to go down to the barge that was waiting at Fort George to carry the "Blue Bird's" passengers. Josephine's good-byes were all said at the house. She could not bear to have any strangers near when she took that long farewell of her father and mother, and Hazel and Bonny Kate, and then, going up to the room that Aunt Frances had fitted up for her, and burying her face in the pillows of the sofa, it seemed to her as though her heart would break. Sad enough for a bride, you think—so different from all the joyous cheer that ought to belong to a wedding; and yet many happy days were in store for Josephine, many happy years in the old homestead, never so home-like and attractive as since Aunt Frances had regained possession of it. There was quite a little company of them walking down to the barge, so much of a company, indeed, that some boys, who noticed them, wondered "what was up," and having nothing better to do, followed in their train. Captain Boniface, of course, was driven down, and so was Mrs. Boniface and Kate; but Hazel preferred to walk, and with a "teary" little Marberry on either arm made her way along with the rest. There was but one bright spot on the otherwise dark horizon of those little Marberrys, and that was that Hazel's pony, Gladys, had taken up her abode in the Rector's stable, and was to be theirs from that day forth; and they took a sort of gloomy comfort in determining that as soon as they had said good-bye to Hazel herself they would go straight home and into Gladys's stall, and ease their heavy little hearts by doing what they could for the welfare of Hazel's pony. There was no doubt about it, the Marberrys were the most devoted of friends; but there was one thing that puzzled Hazel: Starlight was not as downcast as the occasion seemed to demand. On the contrary, he seemed more cheerful than for many days, and the nearer came the hour for the departure, why the more light-hearted. It was most inexplicable. Could it be, she thought, that she had been mistaken in him all these years, and that, after all, he was a boy with no more feeling than "other boys"?



"ANOTHER MINUTE AND YOU'LL BE LEFT."

It seems that Aunt Frances had finally given her consent to Starlight's scheme to make the round trip on the "Blue Bird," and see the Bonifaces safely landed on British soil, not, however, you may be sure, until she had talked the plan well over with Captain Lewis; but it had all been kept a carefully guarded secret from Hazel, and even Flutters did not know of it. At Fort George final leave was taken of Milly and Tilly, Aunt Frances and the Van Vleets; but we will not say very much about that. There are quite too many good-byes in the world for most of us as it is, and yet, where were the happy meetings were it not for these same good-byes?

Harry Avery and Starlight went over in the barge to the vessel, and as Starlight earlier in the day had stealthily stowed away his baggage, consisting in greater part of an old violin, there was nothing to betray that he had any thought other than to return in the barge with Harry when the time came.

It was not an easy thing to get Captain Boniface aboard of the "Blue Bird," but finally it was safely accomplished to the great relief of everybody, including even Bonny Kate, who had been very much afraid the men would let him fall.

But no one watched the proceeding with greater evident anxiety than Flutters, for Flutters had given himself over mind and body to the Captain, anticipating his every wish, and trying to be both hands and feet to him; and Hazel had been sufficiently gracious to resume without demurring the brushing of her own clothes and sundry other little duties which had of late been performed for her by Flutters.

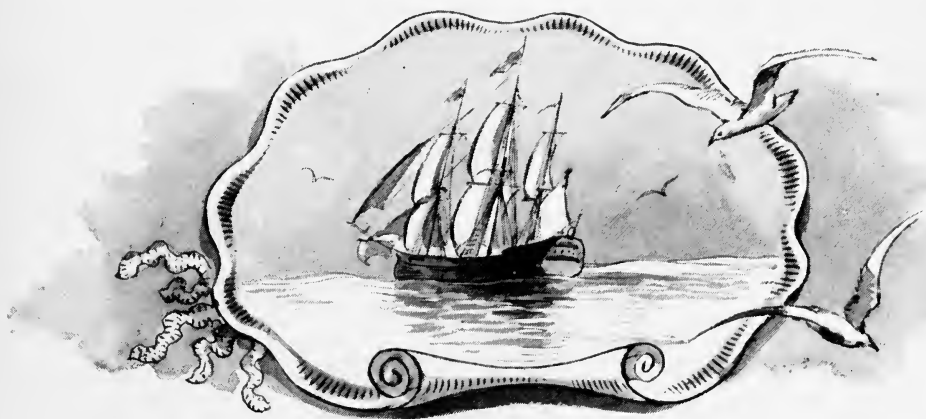
As for Flutters, now that his father was dead, it mattered not to him where home might be, if it were only with the Bonifaces; but he thought he should like some day, when they could spare him from the Rectory over there in Cheshire, to run down to Burnham, and without letting them know who he was, perhaps have a chat with those little white children of his father's, that were babies when he left England, if he should happen to find them playing in the garden of the house where he used to live.

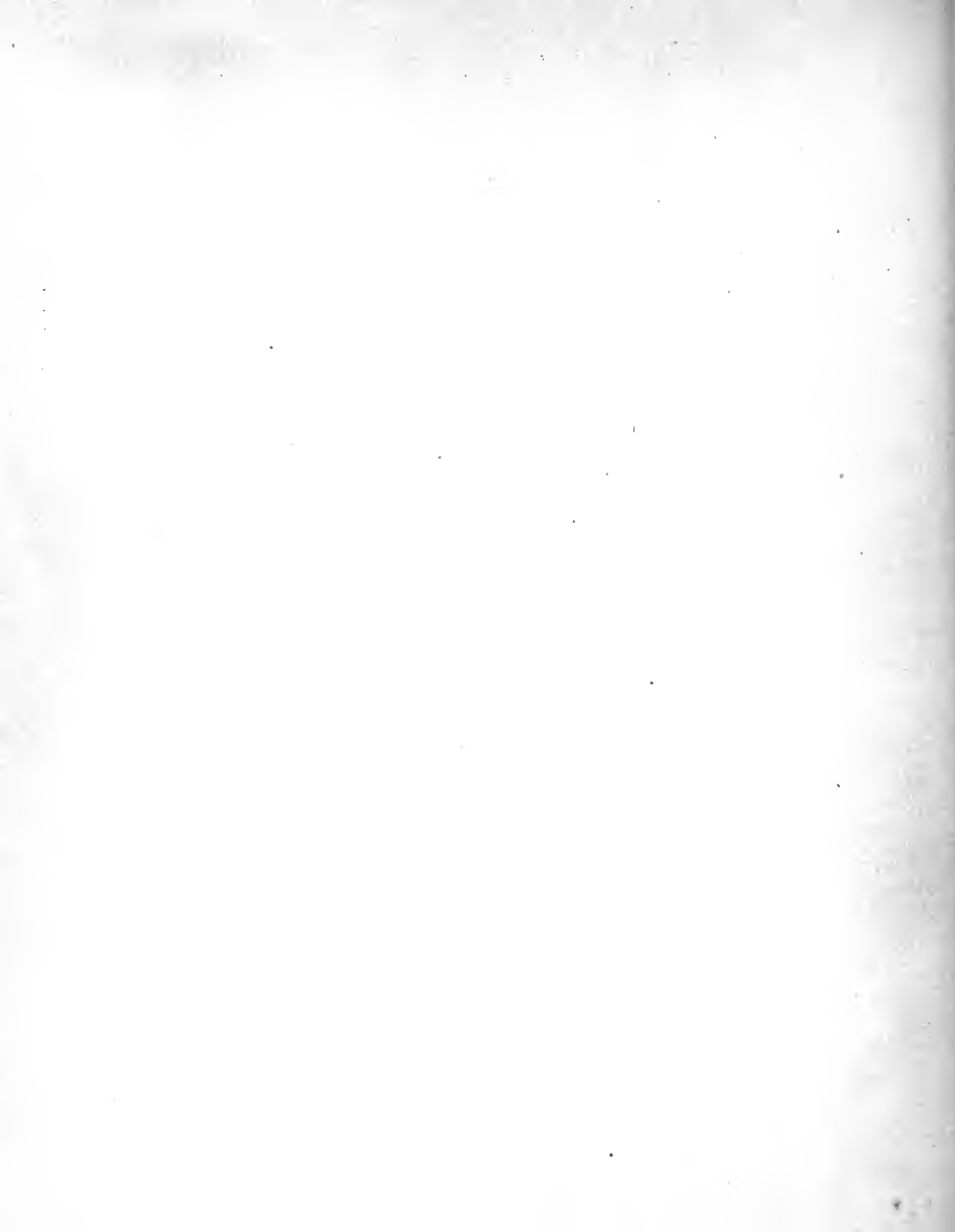
It was a beautiful early-summer day, that 15th of June, and the bay lay sparkling like silver in the sunshine. The "Blue Bird" was booked to sail at three o'clock, and at the exact moment the sailors began pulling hand over hand with their "Yo, heave O," and the "Blue Bird's" anchor was weighed.

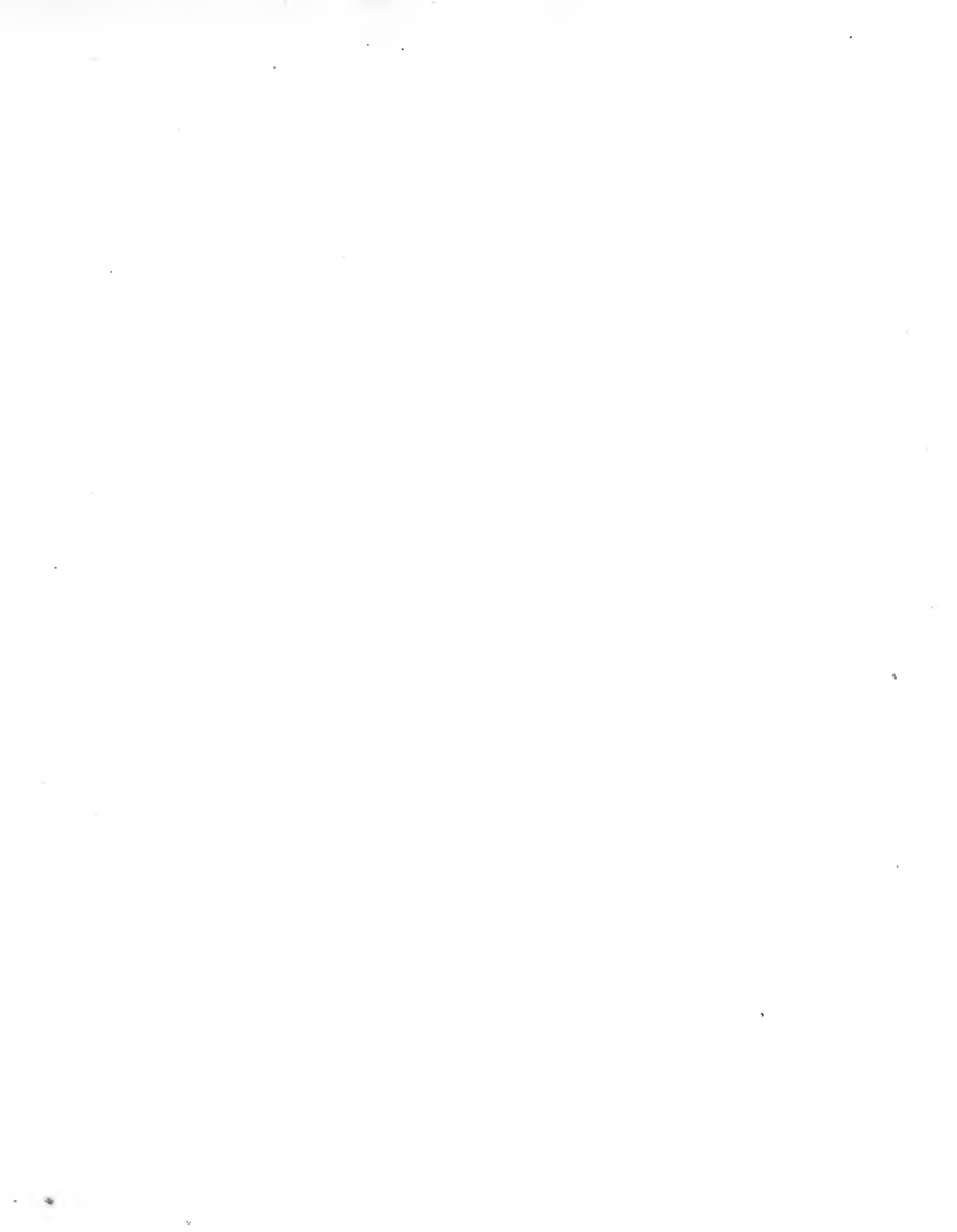
Harry Avery had kissed Mrs. Boniface good-bye, and once again promised, with a tremble in his voice, "to take the best care of Josephine," and now he was climbing down the ship's side, and the rowers of the barge, bending to their oars, were simply waiting to "give way," till he should have stepped aboard.

Starlight, with hands in his trousers' pockets, stood on the "Blue Bird's" deck, apparently unconcerned. Flutters, wondering what the fellow could be thinking of, with an excited gesture gave him a shove in the direction of the barge, while Hazel, with a strong accent on every word, cried, "Another minute, Job Starlight, and you'll be left."

"It can't be helped, Hazel; I'm left now," Starlight answered, and indeed truthfully, for the barge was already yards away; then, seeing how real was Hazel's anxiety over what she deemed a most distressing accident, he hastened to announce, his face wreathed in smiles, "But it's all right, Hazel; I am going to see you safe to England, and Aunt Frances is in the secret." Hazel, as weak as a kitten with delight and astonishment, leaned against the ship's rail, and could not find voice to speak for two whole minutes; while Captain Lewis looked on, rubbing his palms complacently together, and thinking what a grand thing it was to have had a hand in a surprise like that!







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